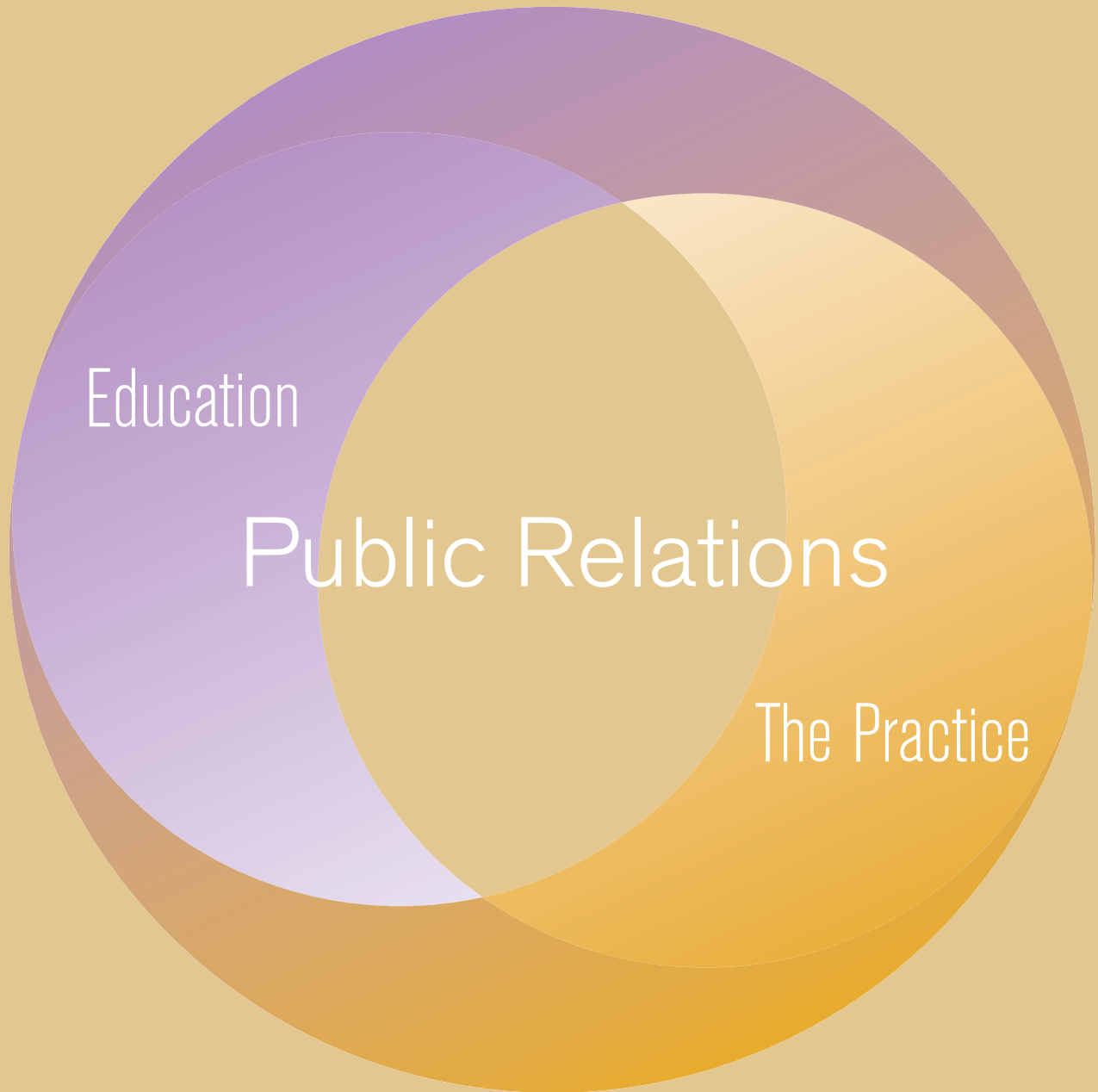


PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION  
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

# The Professional Bond



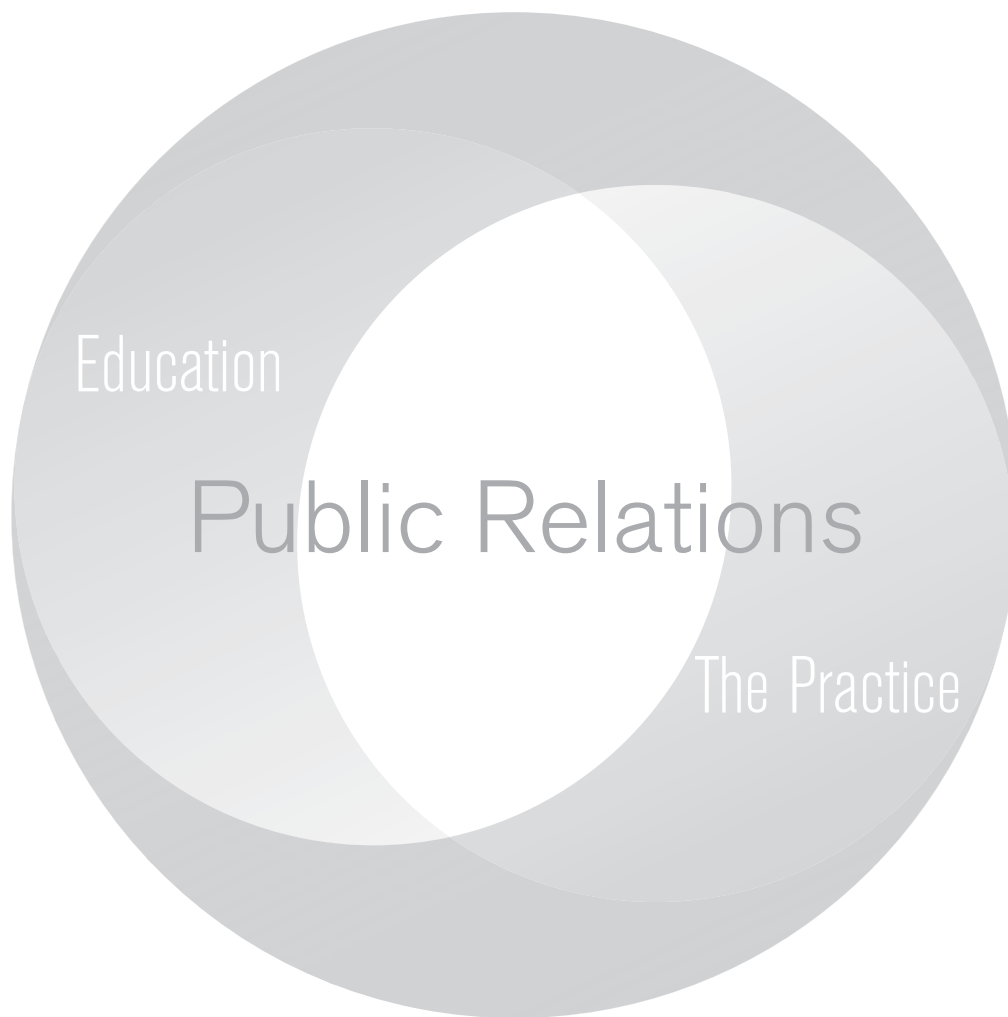
THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION  
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NOVEMBER 2006



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NOVEMBER 2006

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The Commission is also grateful to its active members—those individual educators and practitioners who have played a central role in producing this report, thereby helping to strengthen the bond between public relations education and the practice.



# The Professional Bond— Public Relations Education and the Practice Executive Summary

This report, like earlier reports of the Commission on Public Relations Education, presents recommendations for public relations undergraduate and graduate education.

But beyond this traditional purpose, “The Professional Bond” report has also been developed *to demonstrate, facilitate and encourage the kind of linking of public relations education and practice that is the hallmark of any profession.*

There is much to be done—by every public relations constituency—to complete this bonding. So, to emphasize the importance of this mission, the Commission has prepared the special section, “A Call to Action,” as the conclusion of the report.

“The Professional Bond” report is not meant to be prescriptive. Its recommendations are presented as objectives for excellence as identified by a cadre of distinguished educators and practitioners. And, developed in North America, it is simply a point of reference for the development of public relations education in other parts of the world.

Because it is so ambitious, the report is, necessarily, lengthy. This summary is presented as a stimulant to the reader to partake of the entire report or, at a minimum, to select those topics from among the report’s four basic categories

containing seventeen sections that are most relevant to his or her interests. The complete report is available in both “hard copy” format and on the Commission on Public Relations Education website at [www.commpred.org](http://www.commpred.org)

Selected highlights of the report follow.

## **Research for the Report**

Based on five “waves” of research, the Commission concludes that there is substantial agreement between educators and practitioners on what a public relations undergraduate student should learn, and therefore be able to perform at the practitioner entry level.

Needed at this level: writing skills; critical thinking and problem-solving skills; “a good attitude”; an ability to communicate publicly; and initiative.

There also was agreement that a public relations education should include an internship, practicum or some other work experience in the field.

The research also found considerable support

for interdisciplinary study in subjects such as management and behavioral science.

### **Public Relations Ethics**

In addition to noting that professional ethics is largely predicated on the personal ethics of everyone in the public relations professional community, the Commission emphasizes that:

- ◆ A consideration of ethics should pervade all content of public relations professional education.
- ◆ If a curriculum cannot accommodate a dedicated ethics course, short one-hour courses or mini seminars can provide a meaningful ethics forum for undergraduates.

### **Diversity**

“Successful managers of organizations now recognize that a diverse workforce—recruited, trained and retained—can deliver valuable insights and performance,” the report states.

This section presents an in-depth treatment of defining diversity, identifying its major elements essential to public relations education and how, in the practice, public relations can advance diversity in society.

### **Communication Technology**

“Public relations educators must ensure that their students are prepared not only to be proficient in the use of the most recent communication technology, but also to understand and appreciate the societal ramifications of its use. Educators also must use this technology to maximize the effectiveness of their own instruction,” the report states.

The Commission therefore recommends that the latest communication technology used in the public relations practice be integrated into coursework to the extent that institutional resources will allow; and that student proficiency with such technology may be achieved largely through internships.

### **Global Implications**

“Public relations is now arguably becoming a global profession in an increasingly connected world where mutual understanding and harmony are more important than ever,” the report states.

In recognizing that public relations varies, understandably, with the society in which it is practiced, the Commission in this section presents seven levels of analysis to profile public relations education and practice in various parts of the world.

These levels of analysis are: cultural values and beliefs; laws and public policies; external groups, organizations and associations; institutional factors in the academic setting; international exchange programs; inter-personal factors within an institution; and intra-personal factors among students and educators.

### **Undergraduate Education**

“Undergraduate public relations education has been shifting and repositioning itself in step with the practice of public relations... When practitioners aid organizations in developing mutually beneficial relationships among diverse publics, organizations thrive,” the report states.

Therefore the Commission recommends more emphasis on ethics and transparency, new technology, integration of messages and tools, interdisciplinary problem solving, diversity, global perspectives and research and results measurement.

This section identifies a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills that should be taught in the undergraduate public relations curriculum.

Knowledge to be acquired ranges from communication and persuasion concepts and strategies, relationships and relationship-building and societal trends to uses of research and forecasting, multicultural and global issues and management concepts and theories. A similar sampling of the skills to be attained ranges from mastery of language in written and oral communica-



tions, issues management and audience segmentation to informative and persuasive writing, critical listening skills and applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity.

The Commission has identified the following courses for an “ideal” undergraduate major in public relations:

- ◆ Introduction to public relations (including theory, origin and principles)
- ◆ Case studies in public relations that review the professional practice
- ◆ Public relations research, measurement and evaluation
- ◆ Public relations law and ethics
- ◆ Public relations writing and production
- ◆ Public relations planning and management
- ◆ Public relations campaigns
- ◆ Supervised work experience in public relations (internship)
- ◆ Directed electives

“Although some academic programs will find it difficult to offer seven courses devoted entirely to public relations, the Commission believes the topics covered in the courses above are essential for a quality public relations education. While these topics could be combined into courses in different ways, and some of these courses might also address additional topics, a major should offer sufficient courses to address the knowledge and skills identified as necessary for success in the field,” the report states.

The report continues: “A minimum of five courses should be required in the public relations major.” An academic emphasis should minimally include the following courses:

- ◆ Introduction to public relations (including theory, origin and principles)
- ◆ Public relations research, measurement and evaluation

- ◆ Public relations writing and production
- ◆ Supervised work experience in public relations (internship)
- ◆ An additional public relations course in law and ethics, planning and management, case studies or campaigns

### **Graduate Education**

In qualitative research conducted for this report, 18 public relations leaders supported several types of graduate public relations programs rather than endorsing the MBA or dismissing public relations graduate education as unnecessary. The Commission’s research suggests that graduate education should move toward understanding business, management and public relations as strategic management functions.

#### **MASTER’S LEVEL**

The graduate student should master the following content areas beyond undergraduate competencies:

- ◆ Public relations theory and concepts
- ◆ Public relations law
- ◆ Public relations ethics
- ◆ Global public relations
- ◆ Public relations applications
- ◆ Public relations management
- ◆ Public relations research
- ◆ Public relations programming and production
- ◆ Public relations publics
- ◆ Communication processes
- ◆ Management sciences
- ◆ Behavioral sciences
- ◆ Internship and practicum experience
- ◆ Thesis and capstone project and/or comprehensive exam

The Commission also notes courses such as these can be configured in three different models, depending on student intent—doctoral program, advanced career preparation or a specialization in public relations.

#### DOCTORAL LEVEL

The Commission notes that the production of doctoral graduates has not kept pace with the need, either in education or in the practice. So it recommends academic credentials and “increased partnerships with professionals [practitioners] and professional organizations to help educators stay current with the practice of public relations.”

It also recommends “the development of additional doctoral programs where undergraduate and master’s degree public relations program strength and faculties exist” and lists a series of initiatives to help achieve this outcome.

#### Supervised Experience

This section provides a valuable checklist of 16 issues to be confronted in developing internships appropriate to the academic institution and its students. In addressing the difficult subject of paid or unpaid internships, the Commission notes that “students almost always select the organizations to which they apply for internships, and organizations offering pay attract the best candidates.”

For this and other reasons, the Commission recommends that “sponsoring organizations of all types—companies, firms, government agencies and nonprofits—pay public relations students for internships.”

Among its other recommendations: academic credit for internships should be reserved for workplace experiences that include an on-site supervisor knowledgeable in public relations, and organizations should assign student interns to supervisors who will routinely and clearly instruct students and evaluate their performance.

#### Distance Learning

Commission research determined that despite the rapid growth of online education (distance learning) in the United States, no complete undergraduate public relations online program appears to be available at the time of its research. However, the six universities in the Tennessee Board of Regents System offer a five-course public relations sequence (principles, writing, research, case problems and campaigns) in their organizational leadership concentration for an online bachelor of professional studies degree.

At the graduate level, there is no entirely public relations program that is totally online.

In summary, the Commission suggests that “public relations in the next decade will need to include online education in its mix of delivery methods if it is to keep pace with professional education.” To introduce quality online programs, public relations program administrators and faculty must address resources (incentives, design and development costs), pedagogy and quality assurance.

#### Governance and Academic Support

The placement of academic programs within the administrative structure of universities seriously affects the ability of such programs in public relations to independently respond and adapt to the needs of the public relations profession.

“Too, a dominant influencing factor at an institution of higher education is the degree of outside funding support provided for, or, in some cases, state legislative direction in political response to a profession,” the report states.

The Commission therefore cites two critical needs if public relations is to achieve status as a profession with generally accepted education requirements for performance:

- ◆ Increased economic influence
- ◆ Increased involvement of professionals and

the profession to influence the development of public relations education.

This section recommends specific steps that will increase responsiveness and accelerate advancement as well as intra-institution structural commitments that will strengthen public relations programs appreciably.

### **Faculty Credentials**

There is a shortage of qualified public relations educators, being made more acute by the increasing number of public relations students.

This challenge for the profession is compounded by the fact that colleges and universities are being pressured by accrediting bodies to fill faculty positions with Ph.D.s.

The Ph.D. degree prepares faculty not only as teachers but also as scholars who conduct research using multiple methodologies to help build theory that adds to the public relations body of knowledge.

“While the Commission believes there is a place in the academy for former practitioners with substantial and significant experience, those practitioners may be expected to earn their terminal degrees, i.e., their Ph.D.s, as a credential for becoming full-time faculty,” the report states.

### **Professional and Pre-Professional Organizations**

Students studying public relations in the United States have the opportunity to join any of a number of professional organizations or pre-professional organizations before they graduate. By becoming active members of such organizations, they can begin to see how they might fit into the profession and, perhaps, form a link to an entry-level position.

This section provides detailed information on a number of U.S. and global organizations that assist students in such orientation. The section also presents information on establishing stu-

dent-managed firms through universities and opportunities for scholarships, awards and other support by organizations such as The LaGrant Foundation (internships and scholarships for minority students studying public relations), the Council of PR Firms, the Arthur Page Society and *PRWeek* magazine.

### **Program Certification and Accreditation**

Many public relations academic programs benefit by being certified by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and/or accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC).

These programs gain from the extensive self-examination against certification and accreditation standards of excellence. And they also acquire stature for having met these standards.

PRSA Certification examines the public relations program exclusively while ACEJMC accreditation is a “unit” examination, i.e., it reviews all mass communication programs at the institution, which often include print and electronic journalism, advertising and public relations.

Both programs are voluntary. Each has nine standards of review with recent added emphasis on diversity and outcomes assessment. Currently, public relations programs at 14 U.S. universities, one Canadian college and one university in Argentina are certified by PRSA. ACEJMC currently has granted accreditation to 88 mass communication units with public relations programs.

The Commission recommends that more public relations programs seek certification and/or accreditation and that more practitioners volunteer to serve on site visiting teams for these important evaluations of academic excellence. In addition, it urges public relations associations not now members of ACEJMC to consider joining the Council, thereby increasing public relations’ “share of voice” in this important endeavor.

## A Call to Action

Contemporary public relations education is still young, searching for its “home”—and often its legitimacy—in academe. The field is largely populated by practitioners who never had an opportunity for its formal study, thus learning their craft primarily from lengthy experience.

That picture is changing. Graduates from public relations academic programs are entering the field in increasing numbers.

“While the record of broad support for public relations education by professional groups is growing, there is a critical need for similar action by individual practitioners and the firms, companies and organizations with which they are associated and in which they are influential,” the report states.

“Too few are contributing financial support to public relations programs in colleges and universities of their choice,” according to the report.

This final section is the Commission’s clarion call to practitioners for a new level of commitment to public relations education. It enumerates eight specific actions—some financial, some “in kind”—that practitioners can take to strengthen the professional bond between education and the practice. And, the Commission notes, educators likewise can have a vital role in strengthening that bond, mainly by taking the initiative to establish or nurture relationships with practitioners and their organizations.

The “A Call to Action” section also presents the first known “Sampling of Major Gifts to Public Relations Education,” a valuable compendium of such largesse provided to stimulate addi-

tional support to public relations programs.

*“Today, there are too few ‘angels’ supporting public relations education, but just a few can lead the way.”*

Betsy Plank, APR, Fellow PRSA  
50-year public relations executive and donor

*“What a wonderful service you have done for public relations in compiling the list of major gifts to forward public relations education”*

Harold Burson, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Burson-Marsteller

## A Good Place to Start

*Here’s how:*

Contact the development staff at your *alma mater* if it has a public relations program. If not, select a program from the list of PRSA-certified units in the Program Certification and Accreditation Section ([http://prsa.org/\\_About/overview/certification.asp?ident=over5](http://prsa.org/_About/overview/certification.asp?ident=over5)) or from the list of ACEJMC accredited units (<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/STUDENT/PROGLIST.SHTML>). A third option is to identify a program that sponsors one of the more than 270 chapters of the Public Relations Student Society of America ([www.prssa.org](http://www.prssa.org)).

Any of these first steps will put you on the road to supporting not only the individual public relations program but also *The Professional Bond—Public Relations Education and the Practice*.

[www.commpred.org](http://www.commpred.org)



# Preface

This report is required reading for everyone who thinks public relations professionalism matters: practitioners, educators, students and university administrators.

If you work in public relations, or teach it, you probably have used the word “profession” from time to time. Indeed, when we define public relations in its broadest sense—as an essential management function that helps an organization and its publics build relationships that enable them to understand and support one another—a case can certainly be made that public relations is a profession.

Many scholars argue that an occupation becomes a profession only if certain conditions exist, among them:

- ◆ a substantial body of research-based knowledge;
- ◆ standardized education systems to help create and disseminate that knowledge;
- ◆ a commitment to lifelong professional learning;
- ◆ core ethical principles;
- ◆ and a fundamental sense of responsibility, increasingly global in scope, for bettering our civil societies.

While it might seem that *The Professional Bond* has been developed primarily to assist educa-

tors as they develop public relations curricula and administer programs in this field, the Commission on Public Relations Education believes that this report will have value for a broad spectrum of other audiences as well:

- ◆ Public relations practitioners, as employers in virtually every kind of institution. They will gain a clearer picture of how public relations education prepares today’s students to match practitioners’ criteria for entry and growth in the field—and perhaps conclude that practitioners must increase their support for public relations education.
- ◆ Business, government and nonprofit leaders. This audience may find new insights into how public relations can help organizations build and maintain robust, mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders at a time when the challenges of globalization, technology, diversity and ethics have never been greater.
- ◆ Students who are studying or considering public relations at the undergraduate and graduate levels. They will learn the intellectu-

ally challenging, socially significant field that awaits them—where job prospects are brightest for those who have experienced a thoughtful, well-rounded curriculum that prepares them for what lies ahead.

- ◆ University administrators who may develop a stronger appreciation for the growing appeal of public relations study, as evidenced by increasing enrollments. They will perhaps be moved to channel increased support to such programs.

This report is structured for all of these audiences. An executive summary, available in both print and online, aims to satisfy those who seek to quickly grasp the overall direction and importance of the Commission's recommendations. Readers in search of more depth will want to review the complete report, which also is available in print and online.

The Commission on Public Relations Education includes representatives of 12 professional soci-

eties in the field of public relations and communication. The Commission published its first curricular guidelines in 1975. The 2006 report marks the fourth revision over three decades.

The last report, issued in 1999, carried the title *A Port of Entry*. That report articulated its mission as providing guidelines, recommendations and standards for public relations education—undergraduate, graduate and continuing—for the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The 2006 report seeks to surpass even the ambitious mission of 1999 in connecting public relations education more closely with the practice. This new effort reflects two years of national research and study conducted pro bono by the Commission's educators and practitioners. It will be judged a success if intended audiences conclude that public relations education today is more attuned than ever to helping the profession build understanding, credibility and trust between organizations and their publics.



# Introduction

The Commission on Public Relations Education said in its October, 1999, report, *A Port of Entry*, “The changes in public relations practice since the 1987 Commission on Public Relations Education report are numerous and profound.... By any measure, the growth of the public relations profession over the past decade has been astonishing.”

This is an understatement when the growth and changes occurring since the 1999 report are examined. This growth and five major areas of change inform this 2006 report.

## **Growth**

This report began as an interim effort on the way to a new full report in 2009, 10 years after the last report. Commission members soon discovered, however, that the practice of public relations has grown and changed so much since 1999 that an interim report would have been inadequate. For example, in a field that was once predominantly male, females now constitute almost two-thirds of all practitioners and as much as 70 to 80 percent of undergraduate enrollment in some university programs, an imbalance that has been increasing since 1999.

Growth in public relations education is not just a matter of raw numbers, such as those reflected in ever-increasing classroom enroll-

ments. It is also occurring relative to other areas within communication, journalism and related fields such as marketing and management. For example, the May 2005 *AEJMC Newsletter* of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication [AEJMC] reported that in just the 197 universities responding to a survey, there were “281 programs—133 in public relations, 95 in advertising and 53 advertising-PR joint programs. Since 1992-93, the number of public relations programs increased by 14, while advertising dropped 25.” On yet another and very important front, the Public Relations Student Society of America has grown to more than 270 chapters.

Another sign of growth: journalism as a profession appears to be losing ground to public relations as reflected in projected growth in employment. The 2006 *Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook* (<http://www.bls.gov.oco/ocos086.htm>) pre-

dicts that public relations employment will grow from 18 to 26 percent between 2004 and 2014 while jobs for “news analysts, reporters and correspondents” are expected to be relatively flat over the same period, growing only 0 to 8 percent.

*... (T)he field of public relations has grown and changed so much since 1999 that an interim report would have been inadequate.*

One downside of such growth has been the teaching of public relations-related course content in management, marketing and corporate communication programs by faculty not experienced in public relations nor properly credentialed to teach the subject. As a result we now understand that:

- ◆ Once-a-decade Commission reports may be inadequate.
- ◆ Rather than simply reporting its growth and progress, public relations education has reached a point where it needs to develop new management strategies.

A paramount issue in the management of growth in public relations education is finding ways to answer the need for more public relations instructors trained in and committed to the field. In the past, teaching vacancies in the field have too often been filled with instructors without the Ph.D. or research and theory knowledge, without actual practitioner experience or both. Absent documented and specific public relations experience or graduate study in public relations, a degree in English, business, advertising, journalism, mass communication or other professional fields is not evidence of preparation to teach public relations. Indeed, as the field of public relations continues to grow and become more complex and professional, it is increasingly important to recruit only highly

qualified faculty with both theoretical and experiential credentials.

In addition to growth, the Commission identified five major themes that characterize the development of public relations since the last report: strategic emphasis, internationalization of the practice, the importance of diversity, an essential emphasis on ethics and social responsibility, and increased questions about curricular and structural independence on some campuses.

### **Themes**

#### Strategic Emphasis and Professionalism

The Commission recognizes how rapidly public relations is developing from a set of technical skills into a much more strategic, professional and management-focused endeavor. Public relations is moving up the corporate and public-sector ladders. As a result:

- ◆ While fundamental writing skills remain at the core of public relations education, business and industry have become so strategically oriented in the information age that too much focus on technical skills in a curriculum may actually disadvantage graduates who need greater research, problem-solving, strategic thinking, planning and management and counseling skills.
- ◆ Departments and programs that rely on superficial similarities in writing style by hiring technically trained journalism, English and business writers in place of credentialed public relations instructors are failing to provide their students with a modern, competitive public relations education.
- ◆ Training in research methods should now be only a half step behind writing training as a priority in the public relations curriculum because sophisticated research is central to strategic planning and evaluation. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches should be taught as required core skills in all public relations programs, but the most advanced pro-



grams will emphasize multi-methodological research for both planning and evaluation.

#### Internationalization

Public relations has become increasingly international and intercultural in the last few decades. The Commission's 1999 report was mostly silent on international practice and education in public relations, partly to avoid Commission members being seen as arrogant Americans. Today, public relations educators readily acknowledge how much they have learned, individually and collectively, from practitioners and academics from other cultures, and the Commission recommends an ongoing and expanding exchange.

Current curricula must be updated to reflect the international and intercultural reality that is modern public relations today:

- ◆ Public relations educators in the United States should integrate the experiences of practitioners and teachers in developing areas of the world into their curricula, including lessons learned from portions of non-Islamic Asia, the Islamic world, sub-Saharan Africa, South America and Eastern Europe.
- ◆ An emphasis on globalization, intercultural studies and international programs can now be found in the strategic plans of most universities. No academic field on a campus, except perhaps international studies, is more inherently international than public relations. Public relations curricula should reflect this fact, and public relations academics should play an active role in helping to internationalize their campuses.
- ◆ Because strategic communication campaigns are one of international terrorism's primary weapons, public relations academics have a special responsibility to contribute to anti-terrorism initiatives on their campuses and to use opportunities to educate colleagues on the requirements of ethical public relations campaigns.

#### Diversity

To lead strategic communication efforts in an increasingly diverse society, public relations must meet three diversity challenges. First, public relations must become more diverse in the composition of its student and practitioner populations. Second, public relations must become more sophisticated in meeting the communication needs of diverse communities. Third, public relations must draw on the diversity of the nation as a resource to strengthen corporate, governmental and nonprofit communication. Therefore:

- ◆ Public relations education programs should reflect in their faculty and student composition the racial and ethnic makeup of the society and the campus to which they belong. In some cases, this might require new approaches to recruiting, while in others, innovative course offerings may be needed, and in still others, changes in policies or practices may be needed to attract and retain good minority students.
- ◆ Major issues in diversity, such as the unique economic, employment and health-risk issues confronting minority communities, should be addressed in the public relations curriculum so that public relations students are better equipped to understand the needs of diverse publics.
- ◆ Public relations curricula also should help students develop a sophisticated understanding of the particular communication channels, strategies and customs of minority publics to facilitate more sensitive and effective campaigns in both minority and majority communities.

#### Ethics and Social Responsibility

As public relations evolves into a more strategic and international practice, it affects more people more profoundly, does so in more countries and cultures and does so more quickly than ever before. As a result, public relations

practitioners and academics alike have elevated their concern for ethics by, for example, impanelling a National Ethics Commission and authorizing a major revision of the PRSA Code of Ethics in 2000.

- ◆ Revisions of the PRSA Code (first adopted in 1951), as well as the wording of the Code of Ethics of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), reflect an increasing concern for the social, as well as the economic, role of public relations.
- ◆ Much of the tremendous expansion and acceleration of public relations practice over the past decade can be traced to new information technologies, such as the Internet. As a result, public relations curricula will need to develop more sophisticated ethical analyses to help guide practitioners in ethics and the use of new information technologies throughout and within other cultures.

*...(C)ontinued growth and success in public relations requires lifelong learning.*

#### Curricular and Structural Independence

The Commission found an amorphous but growing sense that public relations might benefit as a profession and in its educational development by sometimes being taught outside of journalism/mass communication and (speech) communication units, the traditional academic homes of public relations education. One concern of public relations educators and students is that the Commission's recommended curriculum revisions, intensive writing training and practitioner links that are needed in public relations may not be feasible in combined journalism, mass communication or communication departments where public relations' large enrollments often are used to fund other subject areas. As a result, funds generated from public

relations students often do not get used to hire well-qualified public relations faculty or to offer needed writing, research and practicum courses. This means in some cases that public relations programs have been, or may be, unable to fully implement recommendations in the 1999 and 2006 Commission reports.

The Commission recognizes department and university administrators have to make resource-allocation decisions based on a variety of student needs so that using public relations-generated resources to support other programs is sometimes appropriate. Nevertheless, when tuition dollars of public relations students are used to fund other subject areas, the effect is to give public relation students a smaller return on their tuition dollars than students in other areas of journalism, mass communication or (speech) communication. Thus:

- ◆ Decisions to use tuition funds from public relations students to help fund other areas of a program should be formally and periodically reviewed and disclosed to the public relations faculty and students involved.
- ◆ The Commission takes no position on whether independent departments of public relations are desirable. Such decisions should be based on careful consideration of institutional missions and program goals as well as an evaluation of how to achieve quality public relations education and professional preparation of students. Independence might offer great opportunities in some cases and great risks in others.
- ◆ In this era of decreasing tax support for public education, the level of practitioner support an occupation enjoys is viewed as a major indicator of the social value of the field. Public relations has succeeded in building several effective bridges between the practitioner and academic communities, although still more are needed. For example, this Commission is a joint academician-practitioner body. Public relations practitioners need to substantially

upgrade their level of financial and other support for academic programs, however, if they are to assure adequate university program support for their profession.

#### A Call to Action

Finally, the Commission wishes to note two critically important subjects of significance to today's—and tomorrow's—public relations practitioners. The Commission suggests that practitioners and educators pay special attention to the "A Call to Action" section of this report which presents a range of initiatives that individuals and organizations can undertake to strengthen the bond between public relations education and the practice. Frankly, practitioner support of public relations education has been inadequate. It is time to remedy this shortcoming!

Too, the Commission notes that, as in all professions, continued growth and success in public relations requires lifelong learning. The opportunities for such professional development, too many to be identified in this report, are as varied as they are vital—with many such opportunities provided by the professional societies that are represented on the Commission. The Commission urges every public relations professional to commit to such study, not only for personal achievement, but also for further development of the public relations profession.

#### **Structure of the Report**

Recognizing that Commission reports often are used more as reference works than as texts, this

report is divided into 17 sections to facilitate finding the specific content a reader may need. These sections are:

- Executive Summary
- Preface
- Introduction
- Research
- Ethics
- Diversity
- Communication Technology
- Global Implications
- Undergraduate Education
- Graduate Education
- Supervised Experience
- Distance Learning
- Governance and Academic Support
- Faculty Credentials
- Pre-Professional Organizations
- Professional Certification and Accreditation
- A Call to Action

While this report benefits greatly from the overall editing of Judy VanSlyke Turk, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, the reader will note that the sections of this report vary somewhat in writing style and structure. This is intentional, both because it gives the reader some flavor of the variety of practitioner and academic bodies that comprise the Commission and, we hope, because it helps reach a spectrum of public relations-related audiences with a variety of voices from both public relations education and practice.





# Research

This report of the Commission on Public Relations Education draws on the findings of five research projects conducted in the United States by Commission members:

- ◆ A survey of public relations practitioners and educators. Randomly selected practitioners and educators were surveyed on the state of public relations education’s student outcomes and curricula at both undergraduate and graduate levels.
- ◆ Personal interviews were conducted with leading senior practitioners and educators. Telephone interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of leading practitioners from corporate, agency and nonprofit public relations. They were asked their perspectives on public relations practice trends and how public relations undergraduate and graduate education could best contribute to improving the practice of public relations.
- ◆ A survey of leaders of public relations firms. Members of the Council of Public Relations Firms were asked their perceptions of the value of public relations education as a hiring credential and as preparation for employment.
- ◆ A survey of faculty advisers to the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). Advisers were asked in a Web-based

survey about internships for public relations students at their colleges and universities.

- ◆ A survey of leaders of public relations academic programs at colleges and universities. Program heads were asked to report on the growth and expansion of public relations curricula and enrollment at their institutions.

There was substantial agreement across the five studies and between practitioners and educators about what public relations students should study and learn, and about what public relations practitioners should be able to do at both the entry level and in senior positions. There also was substantial agreement between these 2006 studies and those conducted by the Commission in 1999 prior to its *Port of Entry* report.

## **What Skills Practitioners Need**

This body of research findings indicates that the top-rated competencies sought in hiring entry-level practitioners are writing skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, a good attitude, the ability to communicate publicly and initiative. For practitioners at a more ad-

vanced level, research skills, the ability to handle the media professionally, work experience in public relations, knowledge of the role of public relations on the management team and knowledge of issues management are the most prized characteristics.

All too often, however, those competencies and skills are weak or missing in both entry-level and more advanced practitioners. Writing skills, understanding of business practices and critical thinking and problem-solving skills were identified as deficiencies in entry-level practitioners, while research skills, a global perspective and experience with a variety of cultures were problematic among more experienced practitioners.

### **What a Public Relations Curriculum Should Include**

A public relations curriculum that would properly prepare undergraduate students to meet the expectations and challenges of public relations careers would, according to this research, include this essential course content:

- ◆ writing and speaking skills
- ◆ the fundamentals of public relations
- ◆ strategic thinking skills
- ◆ research skills
- ◆ planning and problem-solving skills
- ◆ ethics
- ◆ the fundamentals of how organizations operate
- ◆ liberal arts and sciences

There also was substantial agreement that pub-

lic relations education should include an internship, practicum or other work experience in the field. The survey of faculty advisers to PRSSA Chapters indicated that virtually all public relations students complete at least one internship.

At the graduate level, the research showed considerable support for interdisciplinary study that might, for instance, include communication, management and behavioral science.

### **Trends Affecting Public Relations Practice**

These curriculum recommendations were consistent with what both practitioners and educators identified as trends in the practice of public relations. The public relations knowledge and skills they identified as essential would prepare students to succeed professionally in the context of these trends:

- ◆ the need for transparency and accountability
- ◆ the increasing value of public relations to top management
- ◆ the demand for public relations research methodology, measurement and metrics
- ◆ globalization
- ◆ an increasingly complex and difficult ethical environment
- ◆ challenges to institutional trust and credibility
- ◆ rapidly changing media
- ◆ technological change
- ◆ the increasing importance of internal audiences
- ◆ the need for organizations to integrate their communication



# Ethics

In today's practice of public relations, ethical conduct is quintessential. Modern public relations is defined by ethical principles, and no public relations practice should exist in contemporary society without a full commitment to ethical practice. Ethics for the public relations profession can be defined as a set of *a priori* principles, beliefs and values that should be followed by all who engage in public relations practice.

Ethical conduct transcends geographical and geopolitical boundaries, and a common standard for ethical conduct should apply across different countries and regions. Thus, international ethical standards should be closely examined and followed. Of course, cultural variables must be considered when public relations professionals practice abroad. However, practitioners should be cautious about determining that questionable practices are “culturally bound.” Rather, public relations professionals should carefully examine whether these practices are indeed commonly adopted within a culture and are considered to be ethical by the majority of local professionals. Also, a practice is not necessarily ethical just because it is widely adopted in one or more countries, as research on international media transparency has pointed out (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003; Tsetsura, 2005).

Recent business and communication scandals have emphasized the importance of honest, fair and transparent public relations, which is a must in today's business environment. One of the greatest challenges for public relations professionals is to demonstrate and prove that new ways of thinking and new practices are indeed founded on ethical principles. New-generation professionals should follow honest practices to build a fundamental trust between publics and organizations. This transparency requires ethical decision-making and an increasingly influential role at the table where decisions are made.

The successful public relations practitioner is highly intelligent, literate and well-read, an educated global citizen with an extensive knowledge of both the history of civilization and of global current events. The practitioner possesses excellent professional communication

skills and has both exceptional depth and breadth in public relations theory.

Equally as important as this professional competence is public relations practitioners' ethical conduct in both their professional and personal lives. Reflexively, the traits of successful practi-

*... (W)hile public relations professional education... cannot make students ethical, ... such education can define and teach professional ethics.*

tioners help to assure that these professionals are capable of making informed and well-reasoned ethical decisions. Practitioners also must appreciate the societal, organizational and personal necessities for abiding by the highest ethical conduct. And, while public relations professional education perhaps cannot make students ethical, either professionally or personally, such education can define and teach professional ethics. It can provide a body of knowledge about the process of ethical decision-making that can help students not only to recognize ethical dilemmas, but to use appropriate critical thinking skills to help resolve these dilemmas in a way that results in an ethical outcome.

Educators and their institutions, in communication and consultation with practitioners, also must identify and resolve their own professional ethical issues related to public relations education. Such issues revolve around the types and numbers of students recruited for this professional education and the likelihood of these students' success, as well as the numbers and credentials of faculty who are assigned to public relations professional education and the budgetary and other resources that colleges and universities invest in public relations education.

### **Summary of Recommendations in the Commission's October 1999 Report**

The October 1999 Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education identified ethical issues as a component of requisite knowledge in an undergraduate education, i.e., as a part of what graduates should know and understand. The report also identified ethical decision-making as a necessary skill. For graduate education, the October 1999 report identified public relations ethics as a content area that should be mastered at a level beyond that expected of undergraduates, recommending a seminar on public relations ethics and philosophy in a sample 30-hour program. Significantly, the October 1999 Commission report listed as first among its 12 assumptions: "The ethical practice of public relations is the context in which and for which education must occur."

The report further declared that graduates of public relations programs should be "ethical leaders appreciative of cultural diversity and the global society," further noting, "Public relations practitioners and educators should be leaders in building understanding that public relations has a fundamental responsibility to society and adds value to society." The study of codes of ethics in public relations, as well as in other professions, was considered to be essential in undergraduate education. Specific legal issues such as privacy, defamation, copyright, product liability and financial disclosure were to be studied as well as legal and regulatory compliance and credibility. The 1999 Commission report further suggested that at least one course in public relations law and ethics should be included in the curricula of public relations programs.

The October 1999 Commission report identified some ethical issues that merited attention in graduate education:

- ◆ philosophical principles
- ◆ international ethical issues



- ◆ concealment vs. disclosure
- ◆ divided loyalties and social responsibility
- ◆ accountability
- ◆ professionalism
- ◆ codes of ethics
- ◆ whistleblowing
- ◆ confidentiality
- ◆ ethical dealing with the media
- ◆ solicitation of new business
- ◆ ethics of research
- ◆ logical arguments
- ◆ multicultural and gender diversity

The report urged Ph.D. candidates to conduct dissertation research that would help to address such important public relations issues as social responsibility.

### **Progress and Change Since the 1999 Report**

Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that public relations educators and professionals are recognizing the increasing importance and complexity of public relations ethics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Exciting new research is being reported not only by senior scholars, but also by younger scholars who have made ethics an important and, in some cases, primary part of their research agendas.

### **New Research Findings and Analysis**

The Commission's most recent research strongly indicates that, given the organizational crises of recent years, ethics and organizational transparency are key issues frequently discussed by both practitioners and educators. Qualitative research participants urged undergraduate education programs to include an examination of ethical issues and societal trends in their curricula. These participants noted the

need for transparency and the increasing trend in accountability, with ethics a more complex consideration today. The Commission's quantitative research echoed these concerns.

And it has become abundantly obvious that public relations cannot be viewed as a "mass media" career bound by traditional media ethics. Rather, it must be seen as a profession of counselors who help to create and maintain an organization's relationships with its stakeholders and with society at large through means that extend far beyond practitioners' historic expertise in sending messages through the mass media. Public relations practitioners are counselors who are knowledgeable—theoretically as well as technically—about communication in its broadest and most philosophical sense. The ethical issues of public relations, therefore, extend beyond those of the mass media. Coursework and instruction dedicated to mass media ethics cannot fully satisfy the needs of public relations professional education.

### **2006 Recommendations**

1. All learning objectives in public relations education must be placed within the framework and context of public relations ethics. Professional ethics must not only be integrated into all coursework in public relations, but must also be given priority as a discrete component of the public relations curriculum. Public relations ethics are critically important because public relations practitioners share with other professional occupations not only the ability to significantly help (or hurt) their clients, but also the ability to greatly influence stakeholders and society at large.
2. Public relations practitioners have an unquestionable moral obligation to act professionally, i.e., in a socially responsible manner, within their own societies as well as within an emerging global community. To do so, the community of public relations professionals, both practitioners and educators,

must publicly define their relationship to society as earning a position of trust. Their behavior must be consonant with the expectations of society, although they have the freedom and responsibility to determine what they ethically may and may not do as a

*... (N)o public relations practice should exist in contemporary society without a full commitment to ethical practice.*

professional community within their society's moral parameters. These professional ethics must consider both the wider moral values of society as well as the aims of public relations practice.

Of course, this "professional" role with its accompanying need for professional ethics necessarily elevates public relations practitioners above the organizational role of obedient technicians who blindly do the will of managers. Complex organizations depend on a range of professionals who have unique knowledge and skills and who exert great influence over the behavior of these organizations through their professional ideologies, theories, values and worldviews.

3. The ethical values of such public relations professionals influence the behavior of their organizations, and thus their professional values become organizational values. Those in the public relations professional community must develop, continually refine and publicly acknowledge their professional ideology, values and belief systems to fulfill their professional responsibilities. These values can and must be taught to students who hopefully will accept and assimilate these common values that result in a morally defensible body of professional ethics.

The Commission recognizes the continuing va-

lidity of the recommendations of the October 1999 Commission report, but with even more emphasis. Specifically:

- ◆ The Commission recommends that a consideration of ethics pervade all content of public relations professional education. This ethics content should be a readily identifiable component that is well-contextualized and integrated, particularly in introductory, campaigns and cases courses in public relations, as well as in law and ethics courses. The last must extend beyond the law and ethics of mass media to include public relations law and ethics. Indeed, the Commission urges that every public relations course begin its syllabus and its first class with the statement that every true profession recognizes that a fundamental priority of any profession is its responsibility toward society at large.
- ◆ While public relations curricula may not have room for a dedicated public relations ethics course, one-hour short courses and mini-seminars on public relations ethics at the undergraduate level can provide a meaningful forum for contemporary ethical issues.
- ◆ At the graduate level, seminars in public relations ethics are recommended, and graduate students, particularly at the doctoral level, should be encouraged to consider public relations ethics as a primary area of scholarly inquiry.
- ◆ Educators and their students, particularly their graduate students, have an obligation to critically examine and add to the body of knowledge of public relations ethics through their research and other scholarship.
- ◆ Educators and their institutions also must identify and resolve their own professional ethical issues that are related to public relations education. Those providing public relations education must fully appreciate:
  - the importance of public relations as a professional occupation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;

- the knowledge and skills required for a successful career in public relations in today's society;
  - the extreme competition for public relations positions;
  - the fact that only the most qualified and best educated students realistically can compete in this career.
- ◆ As well as course content, academic rigor also must be ensured through normative standards. Preparation for a professional career in public relations demands rigorous professional education. In professionalized occupations, e.g., law and medicine, the needs of society are of first concern, followed by the professional community's judgment of an individual aspirant's worthiness to join that professional community. The goals of the individual student are of tertiary concern. This should also be true for the profession of public relations.
- ◆ Finally, colleges and universities providing public relations education must ensure the

adequacy of the numbers and credentials of faculty who are assigned to public relations professional education as well as the budgetary and other resources that institutions invest in public relations education.

The Commission notes that professional ethics are predicated upon the personal ethics of everyone who is part of the public relations professional community. Public relations icon Betsy Plank, who has been a leading member of the Commission since its inception, perhaps says this best:

In recent years, the more I have been concerned and thought about professional ethics, the more I am convinced that they must—invariably—be grounded in personal behavior and character. What does it profit us if students can recite ethical codes and be critical of untrustworthy corporate behaviors but succumb to cheating, plagiarism, et al...? Or if faculty are not vigilant about penalizing such behavior?

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### Notes

Kruckeberg, D. & Tsetsura, K. (2003). International index of bribery for news coverage (Institute for Public Relations). Abstract retrieved September 3, 2006, from [http://www.instituteforpr.org/index.php/IPR/research\\_single/index\\_of\\_bribery/](http://www.instituteforpr.org/index.php/IPR/research_single/index_of_bribery/)

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Plank, Betsy. Fax to Dean Kruckeberg, July 22, 2006





# Diversity

The growing commitment to diversity within the public relations profession—in both education and the practice—is a reflection of the change and progress in society since the Commission’s 1999 report.

Successful managers in all types of organizations now recognize that a diverse employee workforce—recruited, trained and retained—can deliver valuable insights and performance not only in terms of human resources and marketing but also in such C-suite functions as strategic planning and issues management.

The higher education establishment also has recognized the importance of this “culture of inclusion” and has encouraged it—one might say, *mandated* it—with new standards for accreditation of schools of journalism/mass communication and certification of public relations programs. And public relations professional societies, trade associations and research foundations are emphasizing diversity via many offerings to their members.

The Commission decided that although diversity is addressed in other sections of this report, the subject is worthy of a focused, in-depth treatment here. So this section will define diversity, identify its major elements essential to public relations education and suggest how, in

practice, public relations can advance diversity in society.

## **Critical Definitions and Outcomes**

All public relations practitioners, educators and students should be aware of the following terms related to diversity and their application to modern public relations practice.

*Diversity*—Essentially, diversity is defined as all differences that exist between and among people. Typically, diversity is divided into primary and secondary dimensions, primary being characteristics that are innate and can’t be changed (such as gender, age, nationality, sexual/affectional orientation, ethnicity and race) and secondary being characteristics that can be altered (such as religion, geographics, marital status and military service). Understanding the role these dimensions play in how people communicate is as essential as ensuring that organizations demonstrate inclusiveness toward the diversity of their employees, volunteers and other key publics.

*Culture*—Often diversity is confused with cul-

ture, because some dimensions of diversity, especially race, ethnicity, regionality and nationality, have cultures of their own. Culture is typically defined as the sum total of ways of living, including behavioral norms, linguistic expression, styles of communication, patterns of thinking and beliefs and values of a group large

*(P)ractitioners, educators and students must develop an introspective awareness of their own individual cultures, socialization and privileges...*

enough to be self-sustaining and transmitted over the course of generations. Frequently, culture plays a greater role in determining communication behavior than race, ethnicity or other diversity factors and is what creates conflicts because of differences in communication styles associated with those cultures.

*Segmentation*—Regardless of the different groups to which individuals may belong, public relations practitioners must learn how to identify what elements of diversity are salient in various situations and must acknowledge that saliency often is based on whether individuals identify with the culture or characteristics associated with that dimension of diversity. Often, people ascribe identities to people in particular demographic groups or cultures based on what a person looks or sounds like or on where an individual resides or was born. Such an ascription can lead to stereotyping and other problems that make communication difficult and problematic.

*Stereotypes*—Stereotypes are judgments about an individual based on that person's membership in a particular classification. Even though stereotypes can be positive as well as negative, they often are harmful because most are typically incorrect, apply general beliefs unfairly to individuals, can lead to negative self-

fulfilling prophecies and lead to prejudice. Use of stereotypes often reinforces misinformation and causes problems even if stereotyping is done unwittingly. Stereotyping can be just as dangerous as prejudice, which is an irrational dislike, suspicion or hatred of a certain demographic group. Prejudice is often manifested as racism, sexism and homophobia, creating negative actions, policies, words and beliefs based on race, gender or sexual orientation. Public relations practitioners also need to recognize the dangers of being ethnocentric in their thoughts and approaches to managing public relations projects and teams. Ethnocentrism is the negative judgment of other cultures based on the belief that a particular cultural perspective is better than others.

### **PR's Strategic Role in Diversity**

Diversity in public relations often takes two forms: intercultural/multicultural communication and diversity management. The intercultural/multicultural communication aspect of diversity relates to the practice of public relations particularly when the organization is communicating with one (intercultural) or more (multicultural) cultural groups different from its own. Learning how culture and diversity play a role in each aspect of a public relations project (research, planning, communicating and evaluation) is therefore critical for intercultural/multicultural communication.

The diversity management aspect of public relations involves human resource, staffing, team, vendor and personnel functions. Managing diversity well will improve the retention of diverse teams, which is considered beneficial to developing innovative solutions and campaigns. Public relations practitioners and scholars must become familiar with, be able to apply and be willing to research the best practices in both aspects of diversity within public relations.

Contemporary organizations increasingly have had to deal with diversity issues and needs, and public relations practitioners should be at

the forefront in helping organizations respond to these matters. Therefore, public relations practitioners should be involved in an organization's efforts to:

- ◆ communicate the benefits of diversity initiatives to the workforce and external publics.
- ◆ keep pace with the changing demographics of the organization's external environment.
- ◆ understand how different people work and communicate.
- ◆ advance the organization through relationship-building with diverse internal and external constituent groups.
- ◆ respond better to social change by interpreting, explaining and translating how organizations must adapt to events that occur in a rapidly developing and evolving world.
- ◆ understand that in a global environment, organizations have to think differently about diversity—no longer competing for local dollars, but for dollars in the greater marketplace.
- ◆ understand how immigration can enrich a culture and how governments, businesses and other organizations must adjust to handle possible pressure on economic, social, political and educational systems.
- ◆ remain sensitive to matters of diversity and respond to a more diverse workplace and cultural environment generally and particularly as laws have increasingly protected the civil rights of women and minority groups and equal opportunities have become a greater reality.
- ◆ address the challenges of political correctness, especially as it focuses on how groups

of people are labeled.

- ◆ use technological developments to advance global discourse and business.
- ◆ recognize, as national economics become more global in reach, why having a broader cultural perspective is essential.
- ◆ demonstrate how public relations is making full use of the diverse backgrounds, skills and perspectives of all people, thus making working relationships stronger and more effective.
- ◆ ensure a diverse mix of talent is used on campaigns and projects to bring about innovation and creativity, thereby increasing productivity and efficiency.
- ◆ apply diversity awareness as a means to reduce the confusion of practices and policies concerning issues of affirmative action and discrimination and to move beyond the focus on ethnicity and gender to a focus on performance—a quality of the work environment where employee skills are used more equitably and effectively.
- ◆ recognize power imbalances that may exist between the organization and its publics and develop measures to ensure the organization is listening to and proactively engaging disenfranchised and other possibly marginalized groups.

To attain the ability to address these and other issues, practitioners, educators and students must develop an introspective awareness of their own individual cultures, socialization and privileges as well as keen research skills to ensure their communication and other public relations techniques are sensitive, appropriate and effective.







# Communication Technology

The use of communication technology is ubiquitous in contemporary public relations practice, and often there's no choice but to adopt the *newest* communication technology.

For example, even the smallest and most traditional businesses require the Web sites that their customers expect, and the submission of a simple news release to a mass medium's electronic newsroom must satisfy the technological requirements of that medium. Organizations must continually monitor blogs, recognizing that harmful rumors can spread worldwide in minutes. The contemporary practice of public relations requires practitioners to immediately respond to emerging issues and crisis situations via Web sites, blogs and other new media. Today, the choice of communication channels is dictated by technology: a practitioner must seriously consider which message forms and channels would be best for specific publics. Often, new technological forms and channels, such as electronic pitching, podcasting and blogging, prevail over traditional news releases and media kits.

Thus, students must know how to use today's communication technology and must monitor and most likely adopt rapidly and unpredictably changing technology. Equally important, public relations students must be taught

to appreciate and to continually explore the societal ramifications of continually emerging communication technology. Students must learn strategies, not only for using this technology, but also for dealing with its effects, ranging from the ready availability of virtually all types of information to questions of personal and organizational privacy.

Public relations practitioners are among the heaviest users of today's communication technology. However, technology remains simply a tool—albeit an important tool—that practitioners must manage. This means public relations professionals must not be unduly constrained by technology in developing their communication strategies, nor must practitioners' strategies and tactics be restricted by the technicians who develop and maintain organizations' communication technology infrastructures. Rather, public relations practitioners must be the managers of how their organizations strategically use communication technology to affect public relationships. Within their organizations, public relations practitioners best understand that communication technology that conquers time

and space by permitting instantaneous communication worldwide not only can create understanding and cultivate harmony and empathy between an organization and its publics, but has great potential to generate misunderstanding and to exacerbate disharmony and conflict. With considerable pre-

*... (T)echnology remains simply a tool ...  
that practitioners must manage.*

science, Edward R. Murrow identified the inherent dangers and limitations of today's communication technology over 40 years ago, in October 1964:

The speed of communications is wondrous to behold. It is also true that speed can multiply the distribution of information that we know to be untrue. The most sophisticated satellite has no conscience. The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end, the communicator is confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it.

Thus, public relations educators must assure that their students are prepared not only to be proficient in the use of the most recent communication technology, but also to understand and appreciate the societal ramifications of its use. Educators also must use this technology to maximize the effectiveness of their own instruction.

### **Summary of Recommendations in the Commission's 1999 Report**

The 1999 Commission report said one factor that was causing the impressive incremental growth in public relations was communication

technology that had enabled a veritable explosion of one-to-one communication leading to an uncontrolled, gateless dissemination of messages. Communication technology-related skills the Commission regarded as necessary included the management of information; technological and visual literacy (including use of the Internet and desktop publishing); and public relations writing and production for new media. Instructional recommendations included a greater variety of teaching methods and technologies that might be appropriate in continuing education courses.

### **Progress and Change Since the 1999 Report**

Changes in communication technology have been both immense and obvious since the October 1999 Commission report. Public relations educators are not alone in their inability to reliably predict what tomorrow's technology will be, what will be the societal effects of this technology and how it will affect different societies and cultures. Problematic because of these unknowns, of course, is what educators should teach their students. Virtually all public relations education programs in the United States, as well as elsewhere throughout the world, recognize that their curricula must keep pace with the continuing developments in communication technology to the fullest extent possible, given the financial and other resource limitations that commonly restrict the intentions of higher education.

The implications for public relations of changes in communication technology have been profound. Students' reliance on electronic databases in their research, rather than on traditional library holdings, has become the norm. The implications for public relations practitioners can also be mind-numbing; instantaneous communication through multiple channels creates the expectation of immediate feedback, eliminating opportunities for prolonged deliberation in decision-making.

Largely unappreciated is the contention that technological developments do not inherently provide meaningful social benefits, as well as the likelihood that adoption of new technology may influence different cultures in different ways or to a different extent. Fundamental questions remain worldwide about the access

*... (P)ublic relations practitioners must be the managers of how their organizations strategically use communication technology to affect public relationships.*

to and control of communication technology as well as about which parties benefit from advanced technology usage.

#### **New Research Findings and Analysis**

Two-thirds of the participants in a qualitative research study conducted by the Commission emphasized the challenges of today's technological advances. A related trend that participants identified was the contemporary proliferation of media outlets.

Quantitative research identified rapidly changing new media as a trend. In this research, educators and practitioners viewed as highly essential public relations course content such as "New PR tools and technologies," e.g., podcasting, blogging and video blogging, RSS feeding, Internet conferencing, e-networking, interactive media kits and e-mail. The research indicates that all these tools should be clearly presented to students.

Undergraduates and graduate students alike should be aware how public relations practices can benefit from use of these high-tech tools. At the same time, educators should lead classroom discussions that explore any adverse impact of technology on society and should challenge students to critically think about use of new technologies to reach public relations goals and

objectives. The questions about credibility and ethical usage of new technology should also be at the center of all discussions about the role of technology in public relations practice.

#### **2006 Recommendations**

- ◆ The Commission recommends that the latest communication technology used in the practice of public relations be integrated into all public relations coursework to the extent that institutional resources allow. Technological support of education has become a priority among virtually all colleges and universities, not only in the United States, but worldwide. Colleges and universities have been generally forthcoming in their recognition of the importance of information technology in higher education and in its support, and much instruction is available (and should be recommended to students as needed) in university short courses and other venues that most educational institutions provide outside public relations coursework.
- ◆ Most students have learned basic information technology proficiency before arriving on their college or university campuses. Nevertheless, deficiencies in communication technology should be quickly diagnosed and remedied. The Commission recognizes that some communication technology that is important to public relations education may be so specialized or so expensive that its use by students may only be possible at internship sites. To ensure that their students learn such communication technology, educators should explore a range of educational opportunities that might be available in cooperation with practitioners. At the least, awareness and basic understanding of such technologies should be taught, even if hands-on use is not possible.
- ◆ Finally, the Commission is equally committed to addressing the philosophical, theoretical and ethical issues related to communication technology. These issues include societal im-

plications and ramifications of new communication technologies. Particularly at the graduate level, such questions should be explored as components of theoretical coursework as well as in seminars that are wholly dedicated

to the topic of technology. Such scholarly inquiry can be facilitated through close communication and cooperation with the practitioners who use the latest communication technology in their day-to-day practice.

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**Notes**

Kendrick, Alexander, *Prime Time: The Life of Edward R. Murrow*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1969, p.5.)



# Global Implications

The rapid expansion and growing sophistication of public relations around the world, both in higher education and in the practice, since the Commission's last report in 1999 is truly remarkable.

Public relations is now arguably becoming a global profession in an increasingly-connected world where mutual understanding and harmony are more important than ever.

In its 1999 *Port of Entry* report, the Commission used a framework with seven levels of analysis that apply to all social systems; in this way, it identified issues and factors that have implications globally for public relations education and practice. In this new report, the Commission uses this framework again and provides an updated analysis that may provide new, relevant insights and, perhaps, stimulate readers to think of other factors and issues as they go about the hard work of further improving public relations in their respective nations. Much of that progress will result from the creative application of current and future public relations research in various parts of the world.

## **Cultural Values and Beliefs Affecting Public Relations**

There are generic principles of public relations that cut across cultures. For example, relatively

universal values of truth-telling, being fair and doing no harm to the innocent are expressed in codes of ethics established and/or promoted by global professional associations, such as the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, the International Association of Business Communicators and the International Public Relations Association.

Aspects of excellent public relations can be found in all parts of the world. Certainly the publicity model is common worldwide. Of increasing importance, regardless of the culture, are strategic and crisis communication management in response to increasing demands for transparency and corporate responsibility.

Nevertheless, the performance of public relations varies by culture and by socio-economic and political systems. In fact, the role public relations plays within a society can be a defining characteristic of that society—along with the role of the media and the power of public opinion.

Attitudes toward women and socially approved roles for women are another set of markers for a culture. Worldwide, women are playing more

important roles in the practice of public relations. Consequently, the evolving role of women is strongly affecting the evolving role of public relations in society.

Xenophobia and suspicious attitudes toward “foreign” ideas affect the acceptance and

*... (T)he role public relations plays within a society can be a defining characteristic of that society....*

growth of a Western approach to public relations within a country, especially in the early stages of the development of the “local” field. Often the concept has to be “reworded” and contextualized into the culture’s language(s), values and beliefs before the next stage in the development of the profession takes off.

Confucianism and other Asian philosophies support a communitarian approach to public relations, and are being recognized and incorporated into theory building and practice.

Now as never before, the public relations field is influenced by—and has influence on—evolving global connectedness. On a macro level, this connectedness means growing interaction between “rich” and “poor” societies as well as between different political, cultural or economic systems. The result is a host of international issues affecting strategic public relations, among them: transparency, capital flows, trade, immigration, illegal drugs, disease, resource depletion, environmental protection, education and, even more tragically, regional warfare, ethnic cleansing and terrorism.

Global advancements in communication, democracy and social interdependencies are increasing the importance of public opinion and consequently, the role of public relations throughout the world.

### **Laws and Public Policies Affecting Public Relations**

Corporate transparency legislation in various jurisdictions around the world is increasingly similar. Certainly all capital markets are not alike; but regulations such as Sarbanes/Oxley in the United States and similar regulations in other financial markets outside the United States are having a cumulative positive impact on public relations. There are more reasons than ever for public relations expertise to be an integral part of senior management.

Too, there are country-specific regulations dealing with corrupt foreign practices, freedom of information, anti-terrorism, corporate disclosure and private citizen surveillance—each from its own cultural and national point of view. All of these issues point to a shared need and responsibility for all international practitioners to protect the global image of the public relations profession and justify its social role.

National and international trade agreements have public relations implications. Recent examples: U.S.-based Google in China and a Dubai-based company seeking to manage U.S. ports.

A potent combination of political will, public relations strategies and the creation of technological infrastructure has narrowed the communication gap between government and the people and stimulated consensus building. This can be seen especially in India.

And in certain regions of the world, most especially in Korea, government/corporate cooperation in generating and sharing research data is critical to the success of public relations campaigns.

### **External Groups, Organizations and Associations Affecting Public Relations**

Expertise in global communication is now increasingly available through professional conferences, workshops, Web-based seminars, blogs and Web sites. These resources are available not

only to practitioners but also to educators.

At many large counseling firms, recent international growth rates have exceeded domestic growth rates. These firms have rapidly expanded their business in Asia (one firm reports having seven offices in China), Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. Global networks of counseling firms, such as Pinnacle and WorldCom, are serving clients throughout the world.

With increased international trade and capital flows, many corporations have found it necessary to open public relations offices and/or retain local or international counseling firms in various countries. Similarly, issues originating in one part of the world are metastasizing internationally via the Internet, demanding global crisis communication management.

An example of excellent global public relations is the World Bank's "Communication for Development" program which has assigned to some communicators the role of researching and reporting conditions in developing countries and then playing a central role in developing and implementing change strategies as well as communications.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) today often involves international and multicultural stakeholders. Stewardship of this function is increasingly being awarded to the top public relations officer function, even when it operates under a different title. CSR's global implications are becoming more apparent as corporations increasingly examine their potential responsibilities and opportunities in developing countries through conduits such as the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

Globalization and information technology have made nation-to-nation public diplomacy and nation-to-the-world communications far more rapid and transparent. As governments, non-governmental organizations, allied industries and corporations grapple with "winning the hearts and minds" of often distant and hostile publics, foreign service experts are being

teamed with public relations specialists in public diplomacy programs.

### **College/University Factors Affecting Public Relations Education and Practice**

The rapid growth of public relations practice worldwide has called for an active development of public relations education. For example, at the time of the 1999 *Port of Entry* report, the concept of public relations was foreign to many communication professionals and journalists in countries like Russia, Ukraine and China. Today, Russia accounts for more than 80 university-based public relations programs, and China has more than 320 institutions of higher education that offer public relations courses.

Importing or significantly adapting North American and Western European models of public relations has become a standard practice for many countries in Latin America and Asia. Many such programs are built closely on the Western prototypes and offer traditional classes in public relations tactics, such as media relations, as well as comprehensive public relations campaigns.

Many students of public relations in countries outside the United States receive more training in strategic management than do some students in the United States. The best programs outside the United States stress classes in the liberal arts and the social sciences, with an emphasis on psychology, political science, marketing and management.

Public relations schools of thought outside of the United States often emphasize a "relational approach" to public relations, as opposed to a "persuasive approach." Chinese and South Korean educators, for instance, emphasize harmony and compromise as major subjects, in the best tradition of Confucianism. And—in a reversal of influence patterns—some of these Asian philosophies and theoretical frameworks are making their way to the United States and affecting public relations theory and practice.

The placement of the public relations program within a specific department of a school at an educational institution varies greatly around the world. In North America and Western Europe, traditional public relations programs are housed in or near journalism schools and mass communication programs. But elsewhere,

*The placement of the public relations program within a specific department of a school... varies greatly around the world.*

as more departments and schools are eager to benefit from lucrative opportunities to teach public relations, the placement of the programs more often than not reflects the aggressive leadership of various departments. Consequently, some public relations programs outside the United States are being developed and housed in such non-journalism, non-communication departments as history, political science or sociology. Each of those programs is grounded in the theories and practices of the home discipline and science.

As a result, many of these public relations programs have developed their own schools of thought concerning the role of public relations in society and how best to teach the practice of public relations. Educators have studied the development and placement of public relations programs within universities in different parts of the world.

Influence on public relations education and practice spreads beyond traditional educational institutions. In countries where public relations is very young as a profession, public relations practitioners and educators, in effect, “teach by doing” through continuous communication with journalists and their communities in general. Such construction of the social profession takes place through constant comprehensive conversations and discussions of what public

relations is, as well as what it should and should not be.

Educators and practitioners of public relations can contribute significantly to the formation of the “conscience of society” by practicing ethical public relations. And universities with public relations academic programs and excellent university relations departments can become role models for other educational institutions and, in fact, for all manner of organizations in their nation or region.

### **College/University Small Group Factors Affecting Public Relations**

International exchange programs for faculty and students are contributing materially to the understanding and development of global public relations. They are projecting their regional and global perspectives “one classroom at a time,” thereby having a significant impact on their participants and the profession.

By their significant and growing numbers, North American educators who have taught or are teaching outside the continent have especially influenced the development of the field in other countries. Many new public relations programs, including several programs in the Middle East and in Russia, have been created or expanded by these educators. And when they return home, these educators bring back new perspectives of public relations benefiting both their students and colleagues. Likewise, public relations educators trained in master’s and doctoral programs in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia, in particular, are influencing the development of theory and expanding global research.

Educators and practitioners from around the world who are actively involved in professional organizations and attend international and regional research and professional development conferences are also greatly influencing the globalization of public relations curricula and the status of the profession worldwide.



### **Interpersonal Factors Within Institutions of Higher Education Affecting Public Relations**

The relationship between university administration and faculty is critical to academic success the world over. However, in the development of public relations programs in countries new to the concept, this relationship can result in situations that may seem strange to American educators and practitioners.

Many of the university public relations programs in the United States are based, at least in part, on the way the practice is developing; administrators have (or claim to have) a basic understanding of the field. However, many of the administrators in newly emerging market economies do not understand the value of public relations to society and most public relations educators in these countries don't have formal training in the field. Therefore, some of these university administrators offer programs that are widely interdisciplinary and develop their own views on how public relations should be practiced and taught.

Increasing multiculturalism and the diversification of the public relations field worldwide are creating new opportunities in the classroom and in the global public relations practice, as well as creating a greater need for practitioners, students and educators to be sensitive to diversity issues such as race, sex, age, ethnic origins and religious preferences.

### **Intrapersonal Factors and Individual Traits Affecting Public Relations**

Advertising, marketing and public relations campaigns are shaping a global "mediated self." It is striking to see in modern shopping malls around the world how similar are middle-class teenagers: they often walk in an electronic

fog of their own making, listen to the same global rock stars, repeatedly use cell phones, wear the same brands of clothes and eat at the same fast-food franchises. Especially among young people, there is a growing awareness and recognition of their commonality with their peer group elsewhere in the world. The global "mediated self" is both an opportunity for good and a potential problem for educators and practitioners alike.

On the other hand, cultural identity affects how an individual recognizes problems, perceives his or her level of involvement in a situation, and how information is searched for and processed.

Gender, physical traits and internalized sex roles remain significant cultural traits, with both limitations and strengths for different individuals. These differences affect the professional development of public relations practitioners.

Background and training of educators have an influence on how public relations is taught and how curriculum is developed.

Personal ethics and identification with an organization concerned about professional ethics help the individual practitioner develop a moral framework for public relations practice.

*The factors listed above are indicative of four global trends: 1) the expansion of public relations capabilities in virtually every nation; 2) the increasingly sophisticated agenda of 21<sup>st</sup> Century corporate social responsibility; 3) the critical importance of transparency and public relations for both public and private organizations; and 4) the increasing number of public relations educators and students teaching and studying outside their country of origin.*





# Undergraduate Education

The knowledge and skills required of public relations practitioners have not changed much in content over the past seven years. But they have been significantly refocused and repositioned in terms of priority and emphasis.

Recent research provides a deeper understanding of the demands on and changes affecting the field of public relations. There is a clear need to put more emphasis on particular issues and trends in the field such as ethics and transparency, new technology, integration of communication messages and tools, interdisciplinary problem-solving, diversity, global perspectives and research and results measurement.

Undergraduate public relations education has been shifting and repositioning itself in step with the shifts in the practice of public relations. Those academic programs that consciously aligned themselves with the recommendations of the Commission's 1999 report have found themselves well-positioned to respond to trends and changes in the field as they have occurred. Such responsiveness points to a closer working relationship between educators and practitioners than may have been the case five years ago.

## **Progress and Change Since the 1999 Report**

In the field of public relations, the greatest changes/advancements have been in the areas

of diversity, technology and global communication. Crisis communication and social responsibility have also emerged as essential public relations functions.

The public relations industry is under increased scrutiny to embrace and demonstrate its ability to diversify its workforce and communicate across cultures, races, genders, sexual orientations, languages, ages and other dimensions of diversity. When practitioners fail to do so proactively, with sensitivity and understanding, negative activism and negative attention directed toward organizations often result. On the contrary, when practitioners aid organizations in developing mutually beneficial relationships among diverse publics, organizations thrive. Incorporating elements of inclusion and diversity throughout the undergraduate curriculum is therefore essential to adequately prepare future practitioners for the roles they will play in such relationship-building.

Web sites in this millennium have gone from being a corporate frill to an organizational necessity. Blogging has become both a threat and

a tool for organizational communication, and public relations professionals must monitor blogs (and, in some cases, respond to them) in an effort to protect, maintain and defend reputation. Consequently, some colleges and universities are beginning to develop courses to teach skills necessary to use these new technological

*... (P)ublic relations education must be interdisciplinary and broad, particularly in the liberal arts and sciences.*

tools. Other programs, noticing that web sites and blogs are often lacking in quality and style, emphasize adapting traditional skills such as writing to the new technology.

As international trade and commerce continue at a rapid pace, as U.S. companies seek outsourcing as a method of increasing profit margins, as arguments flare over immigration, as issues such as terrorism and health pandemics face the entire globe, practicing public relations internationally and not just locally has become a requirement, not an option. Some undergraduate programs are adding global content (which is popular among students), and some are offering a semester abroad with internship opportunities in addition to courses in culture, language and international history.

As the news media, in an effort to compete for readers and viewers, concentrate on crises and scandals, companies and organizations are feeling the need for public relations departments and practitioners to protect their reputations and lead crisis communication planning and response. Issues management, crisis management, community relations and relationship-building have been key foci of research and practice, particularly post-9/11 and post-Enron. These foci have transitioned from research into the classroom and are being

taught as part of the public relations curriculum. The inclusion of public relations at the management level in dealing with these issues and crises has precipitated a move toward interdisciplinary undergraduate education. Rather than directing students to complete courses in relevant disciplines such as business and social/behavioral sciences, some of the content of those kinds of courses is being incorporated directly into the public relations curriculum.

Even with educational programs keeping pace with changes in industry, the shortage of faculty with appropriate academic and professional qualifications continues to plague public relations education. The shortage of faculty with a doctoral degree might actually be called a crisis. As programs grow and expand with more classes offered, students are increasingly being taught by faculty not qualified in public relations. Some see a solution through joint Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs providing academic training for practitioners who are part-time instructors interested in qualifying for full-time positions. Meanwhile, the competition for doctoral talent is exacerbated by the growing global interest in public relations education. Faculty with public relations Ph.D.s are being recruited to join faculties outside the United States.

Finally, the trend toward outcomes assessment at colleges and universities corresponds to the trend toward better measurement and assessment in the field. Assessment in public relations education focuses on basic standards of performance. Many programs are therefore implementing summative evaluation (i.e., portfolio reviews) of public relations students as they approach graduation to determine whether basic standards have been met. There is also heightened interest in tracking graduates to assess placement and career paths.

### **2006 Recommendations**

As the field of public relations has changed since the Commission's 1999 report, education

has kept pace with those changes. So, while the fundamental knowledge and skills recommended by the 2006 Commission have not changed since 1999, the Commission suggests a need for refocusing and realignment in terms of what is most heavily emphasized in an undergraduate public relations curriculum. The purpose of an undergraduate degree is still to prepare students for entry-level positions and to advance over the course of their careers into leadership roles. But what they need to know and be able to do has shifted somewhat.

Research suggests that professional success requires that the right knowledge and skills be accompanied by appropriate personal traits, and certain attributes have been identified as developmental necessities. It continues to be crucial that graduates be responsible, flexible and professionally oriented self-managers. For communication to occur with and among diverse audiences, individuals must be able to respond and adapt to new and changing situations and to feel comfortable in having to make such adjustments without giving up personal identity. Students must have intellectual curiosity and be able to think conceptually. They must have positive attitudes and be able to take criticism. They must be organized self-starters who take initiative to solve problems. They must be both creative and pragmatic, and they must have integrity as team participants and leaders. Students should be able to demonstrate respect and empathy; even if practitioners do not belong to a group or agree with it, a practitioner must be able to show appreciation for those who are different and be able to understand others' cultures and perspectives.

Therefore, public relations education must be interdisciplinary and broad, particularly in the liberal arts and sciences. A minor or double major is recommended to broaden students' education and knowledge base.

The following reorganization of the knowledge and skills identified and recommended in the 1999 Commission report reflects current re-

search on requirements for successful entry into the field.

### 1. Necessary Knowledge and Skills

The following knowledge and skills should be taught in an undergraduate public relations curriculum:

#### *Knowledge*

- ◆ Communication and persuasion concepts and strategies
- ◆ Communication and public relations theories
- ◆ Relationships and relationship-building
- ◆ Societal trends
- ◆ Ethical issues
- ◆ Legal requirements and issues
- ◆ Marketing and finance
- ◆ Public relations history
- ◆ Uses of research and forecasting
- ◆ Multicultural and global issues
- ◆ The business case for diversity
- ◆ Various world social, political, economic and historical frameworks
- ◆ Organizational change and development
- ◆ Management concepts and theories

#### *Skills*

- ◆ Research methods and analysis
- ◆ Management of information
- ◆ Mastery of language in written and oral communication
- ◆ Problem-solving and negotiation
- ◆ Management of communication
- ◆ Strategic planning
- ◆ Issues management

- ◆ Audience segmentation
- ◆ Informative and persuasive writing
- ◆ Community, consumer and employee relations and other practice areas
- ◆ Technological and visual literacy
- ◆ Managing people, programs and resources
- ◆ Sensitive interpersonal communication
- ◆ Critical listening skills
- ◆ Fluency in a foreign language
- ◆ Ethical decision-making
- ◆ Participation in the professional public relations community
- ◆ Message production
- ◆ Working with current issues
- ◆ Environmental monitoring
- ◆ Public speaking and presentation
- ◆ Applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity

## 2. The Undergraduate Curriculum

The undergraduate public relations curriculum must continue to be strongly grounded in traditional liberal arts and social sciences.

Coursework in public relations should be built on a foundation of liberal arts, social science, business and language courses. More than ever, this knowledge base must be interdisciplinary. Principles of public relations and management must be intertwined with and related to business, behavioral science, technology and other disciplines. Changes in the field of public relations demand integration of the knowledge and skills of these disciplines. With the growing need for students to be completely conversant in principles and practices of business, there is a parallel need for them to master principles of etiquette and professionalism.

Globalization now requires more attention in

today's public relations education. It is not enough to offer a course with a global focus. Global concepts must be integrated throughout the curriculum because many students will be addressing issues related to globalization, diversity and multiculturalism as they enter the practice of public relations. Fluency in a language other than English also is desirable.

Given the organizational crises of recent years, ethics and organizational transparency also require emphasis across the public relations curriculum. Similarly, relationship-building has become a critical skill. In preparation for working with diverse publics and global issues, students will need to learn that establishing trust and acceptance among publics begins with having a clear understanding of those publics and demonstrating sincerity and commitment.

Technology and its use and abuse have become another important consideration in public relations practice. Students must not only understand current technology and its use, but must develop skills that will enable them to adapt to rapid changes and advancements. It is insufficient to train students to use current technology; they also must be able to identify and analyze new technologies as they emerge, understand the ramifications and implications and develop strategies for using the latest technologies and dealing with their effects. Technology will not be sufficiently addressed if isolated from the rest of the curriculum; the only effective way to prepare students for the rapid changes they will face is to integrate the study and use of technology across the curriculum.

More critical than ever is the need for solid research skills and the ability to interpret and use research in decision-making. Students must be capable of conducting research, analyzing and interpreting data and information, integrating research into planning and management and conducting evaluation that demonstrates results. In conducting secondary research, students should recognize that a variety of voices exist and that many people on the fringes of so-

ciety, or outside the mainstream or center, are often not adequately covered in media and other published works and therefore won't be represented in secondary research sources. Similarly, when learning about primary research techniques, students should recognize the influence that culture and other aspects of diversity have on research design, methods, participants, analysis and presentation of research. And greater emphasis needs to be placed on using solid research to design and manage messages. Not only must students be able to design messages that motivate publics to action, they must be able to manage the distribution and flow of messages to ensure publics actually receive them and that dialogue is facilitated.

Finally, the ability to incorporate the internal audience into public relations planning and communication is increasingly required in meeting the challenges and opportunities presented to an organization. Whereas organizations have always identified employee publics among those considered important, human resources departments increasingly are expecting public relations to manage employee communication, a change from the days when human resources considered communicating internally to be its exclusive purview.

### 3. Content of Undergraduate Courses

The following topics are all deemed essential to a strong undergraduate education in public relations regardless of the course(s) in which they are taught. While many of the topics lend themselves to be framed within a specific course, care must be taken that the concepts, knowledge and skills described above are integrated throughout the public relations curriculum so students better understand the interdisciplinary nature of the practice.

- ◆ Theory, origin, principles and professional practice of public relations: the nature and role of public relations, the history and development of the field, theories and principles

underlying PR practice and the societal forces affecting the profession and its practice. Important to include are the societal mandate and ethical justification of public relations in a democratic society and free-market economy. Also included are practitioner qualifications (including education and training), responsibilities and duties, diversity competencies and skills, functioning of public relations departments and counseling firms and life-long learning and professional development. Also included are a variety of specializations in public relations such as community relations, employee relations, consumer relations, financial and investor relations, governmental relations, public affairs and lobbying, fund raising and membership development, international and cross-cultural public relations and publicity and media relations.

- ◆ Public relations law and ethics: including codes of ethics and practice in public relations and in other professions; ethical issues and trends toward greater organizational transparency and core values; specific legal issues such as privacy, defamation, copyright, product liability and financial disclosure; legal and policy considerations relating to diversity in the workplace and in communication and legal and regulatory compliance.
- ◆ Public relations research, measurement and performance evaluation: including quantitative and qualitative research designs, processes and techniques such as public-opinion polling and survey research; experimental design and research; new research methods and tools; fact-finding and applied research; observation and performance measurement; social, communication and employee audits; issue tracking; focus groups and interviews; use of external research services and consultants and the ability to effectively direct their efforts; media and clipping analysis and historical research. The emphasis should be on measurement of tangible re-

sults in evaluating program effectiveness, staff and counselor performance; criteria for performance; and reporting the results of evaluation. The impact of culture and diversity should be carefully considered.

*A minimum of five courses should be required in the public relations major.*

- ◆ Public relations planning and management: including theory, techniques and models related to setting long- and short-term goals and objectives; designing strategies and tactics; segmenting publics and designing effective messages; identifying appropriate channels to ensure message receipt; analyzing problems and opportunities; communicating with top management; developing budgets; contingency planning for crises and disasters; managing issues, developing timetables and calendars; and assigning authority and responsibility. Diversity should be well-integrated into the content and should include the business rationale for diversity in organizations and the demographic changes within countries and across global communities that affect the role and practice of public relations worldwide.
- ◆ Public relations writing and production: Public relations writing is an essential, discrete skill that is not fully addressed in journalistic writing, composition or creative writing. Content here should address communication theory; concepts and models for mass, interpersonal, employee and internal communication; new and emerging communication technologies and their use and abuse; organizational communication and dynamics; communication with diverse audiences and across cultures; persuasion and propaganda; controlled versus uncontrolled communication; and feedback systems. It also must include competency in such skills as design, layout and graphics; electronic media and Web publishing; speechwriting and delivery; spokesperson training and speakers bureaus; corporate identity and reputation; photography and filmmaking; and working with outside suppliers. It requires a solid understanding of media, media channels, the societal role of media and the challenges in the explosion of electronic and digital media vehicles. It includes message strategy and delivery (i.e., planning, writing, producing and delivering communication to publics in all media channels). It also includes a focus on designing messages to be sent in channels that will ensure publics receive and act on them.
- ◆ Public relations action and implementation: Content includes the actual implementation of campaigns; continuing programs (e.g., product publicity and safety); crises and isolated incidents; individual activities of practitioners and firms, clients and employers; meetings and workshops; and special events. It should include ongoing evaluation of efforts and corrective action based on results measurement while a campaign or program is in process.
- ◆ Supervised work experience in public relations: Internships and other pre-professional work experiences have become essential in public relations education. These practical experiences must be supervised by faculty and practitioners who cooperate to provide professional experience directed by learning objectives and assessed throughout to assure a quality practical educational experience. Students should be sufficiently prepared by prerequisite courses to receive and complete substantive assignments that prepare them to apply the skills and principles they are learning in their programs.
- ◆ Disciplines related to public relations: Supporting disciplines that provide appropriate supplements to public relations educational programs include intercultural communication,



international communication, political communication, organizational communication, interpersonal communication, rhetorical communication, small group communication, psychology, sociology, marketing, management and organizational behavior, finance, journalism, radio and television production, advertising, photography, filmmaking, art design and graphics, information technology and new technology. Students should be encouraged to pursue a double major or minor in a related area of interest.

- ◆ Directed electives: Certain content in other disciplines should be considered essential for the development and preparation of public relations professionals. It is recommended that public relations education become truly interdisciplinary and that content in these areas be integrated into public relations coursework as described above. Nevertheless, more in-depth treatment of the content in related disciplines may be desirable through elective courses to supplement the core public relations and communication courses. Recommended disciplines for inclusion are business management, marketing, accounting, finance, economics, consumer behavior, political science and the political system, public administration, social psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, English and English writing, political science, including government and political campaigns, intercultural communication, ethnic and feminist studies, and international business and communication.

#### 4. Content Configuration in the Undergraduate Curriculum

This report affirms the 1999 report's identification of the following courses for an ideal undergraduate major in public relations:

- ◆ Introduction to public relations (including theory, origin and principles)
- ◆ Case studies in public relations that review the professional practice

- ◆ Public relations research, measurement and evaluation
- ◆ Public relations law and ethics
- ◆ Public relations writing and production
- ◆ Public relations planning and management
- ◆ Public relations campaigns
- ◆ Supervised work experience in public relations (internship)
- ◆ Directed electives

Although some academic programs will find it difficult to offer seven courses devoted entirely to public relations, the Commission believes the topics covered in the courses above are essential for a quality public relations education. While these topics could be combined into courses in different ways, and some of these courses might also address additional topics, a major should offer sufficient courses to address the knowledge and skills identified as necessary for success in the field.

A minimum of five courses should be required in the public relations major. An academic emphasis should minimally include these courses:

- ◆ Introduction to public relations (including theory, origin and principles)
- ◆ Public relations research, measurement and evaluation
- ◆ Public relations writing and production
- ◆ Supervised work experience in public relations (internship)
- ◆ An additional public relations course in law and ethics, planning and management, case studies or campaigns

Programs that offer minors should make it clear that a minor in public relations is not sufficient to prepare students for the professional practice of public relations. Nevertheless, programs may offer minors in public relations to enhance the understanding of students in other professional

disciplines that use or cooperate with public relations. A minor in public relations should specifically address the knowledge outcomes identified above rather than just the skills outcomes.

*Public relations education programs must improve their assessment of results—measurement of outcomes of learning.*

#### 5. Undergraduate Curriculum Models

Because public relations education may be located in various schools and colleges throughout a university, programs are subject to the core requirements of the unit within which the public relations program is housed. For example, programs housed in journalism schools differ significantly from those in traditional schools of communication or schools of business because of the requirements imposed upon journalism schools that wish to be nationally accredited. The Commission suggests three models to demonstrate differing curriculum constructions within the guidelines stipulated above.

##### *Journalism/Mass Communication Model*

(The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) permits no more than 40 credit hours in journalism or mass communication in a 120-hour degree program.)

- ◆ Mass communication and society
- ◆ Mass media writing
- ◆ Communication law
- ◆ Media ethics
- ◆ Public relations theory and principles
- ◆ Public relations writing
- ◆ Public relations research

- ◆ Case studies in public relations
- ◆ Public relations campaigns
- ◆ Internship in public relations
- ◆ Communication electives (e.g., community journalism, management, production, multicultural, international, conflict resolution, messages and media effects and gender, race and ethnicity in media)
- ◆ External requirements (e.g., English writing, accounting, marketing, business management and finance)

##### *Communication/English/Liberal Arts Model*

- ◆ Communication principles and practice
- ◆ Research methods
- ◆ Communication writing
- ◆ Communication production
- ◆ Public relations theory
- ◆ Public relations techniques
- ◆ Public relations writing
- ◆ Public relations campaigns
- ◆ Internship
- ◆ Communication electives (e.g., multicultural communication, interpersonal communication, persuasion, small group communication, ethics, organizational communication)
- ◆ External requirements (e.g., statistics, economics, psychology, sociology)
- ◆ External electives (selected courses outside communication)

##### *Business/Management Model*

- ◆ Marketing and finance
- ◆ Marketing research and statistics
- ◆ Marketing management
- ◆ Consumer insight

- ◆ Communication skills and persuasive messages
- ◆ Public relations strategy and tactics
- ◆ Creative message strategy
- ◆ Media economics and technology
- ◆ Managing communication integration
- ◆ Internship
- ◆ Business electives (e.g., public relations strategy, public relations planning, investor relations, crisis management, issues management, ethics, international business)

#### 6. Teaching Methods in the Undergraduate Program

The 1999 *Port of Entry* report suggested more than a dozen ways that instruction can be delivered to students, ranging from traditional lectures to simulations, games and the use of small-group projects. A variety of instructional media, assignments and in-class activities that can create a bridge between theory and practice also are suggested. The more advanced students should be involved in client work and campaigns. There should be opportunities to engage in research and in competitions both within the university/college and with public relations academic and practitioner associations.

The increasing growth of online courses is demanding a reassessment of teaching methods and more research on the challenges of global curriculum offerings. *Learning to Teach*, published by the Educators Academy of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and available on CD, is a comprehensive resource of teaching methods that have been tried, tested and proven effective in public relations education.

Teaching pedagogies that emphasize teamwork and client service should be well-integrated into programs. To aid in students' acquisition of diversity competencies, professors should whenever possible diversify teams and assign clients,

case studies or service-learning opportunities that involve diverse groups, issues and organizations. Students should also be encouraged to seek numerous pre-professional experiences like internships or volunteer opportunities through student professional organizations and their academic units. The academy must diligently seek to bring practitioners to campus as part of the overall student experience.

#### 7. Undergraduate Program Evaluation

Normative, formative and summative assessment measures should be used to determine whether students have learned what their academic programs intend. These could include entrance/exit examinations, internship evaluation, capstone courses and portfolio review. And traditional self-assessment should be used to measure program effectiveness. This might include examining student evaluations, faculty-student ratios, placement and graduate school admission rates, alumni and employer satisfaction and input from advisory boards.

External program review is also valuable. Sources for this include the Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) offered by PRSA (available to all public relations programs) and the ACEJMC (available to public relations programs in journalism and mass communication colleges, schools or departments).

Public relations education programs must improve their assessment of results—measurement of outcomes of learning. Educators must become more sophisticated and request the participation of practitioners to determine if students are reaching the goals set for their entry into the profession. To this end, this new report has included assessment as a separate section to more clearly identify guidelines.

#### 8. Faculty Qualifications

The 1999 *Port of Entry* report suggested that both academic and professional credentials and practical experience are important for public re-

lations faculty. Ideally a full-time faculty member will have both academic credentials (usually a Ph.D.) and professional credentials—significant work experience in public relations. Programs may need to hire faculty without terminal degrees who have significant and substantial professional experience in order to meet student demand. In addition, all faculty members should be active in professional and/or academic associations and should be contributing to the public relations body of knowledge through scholarship and professional or creative activity.

The 1999 *Port of Entry* report repeats a recommendation from the 1987 Commission report: “Public relations courses should not be taught by people who have little or no experience and interest in the field and have no academic preparation in public relations.” The Commission re-

peats that recommendation again in 2006.

#### 9. Resources to Support Public Relations Programs

Public relations students should have the same access to both faculty and resources as students in other academic programs in the academic unit where public relations is taught.

Faculty workloads should be balanced to include time for teaching, advising, research, service, administrative assignments and the advising of student organizations such as the Public Relations Student Society of America.

Public relations education requires administrative and financial resources that include adequate faculty and staff with properly equipped classrooms, appropriate technology, well-stocked libraries, travel and professional development funding and office support.



# Graduate Education

Master's degree curricula across journalism and communication programs in the United States show little consistency in the content and coursework offered as was also the case in 1999.

The typical curriculum gives a hodge-podge appearance of adding public relations courses to existing journalism and communication programs. Educators have reported, however, a growing number of integrated advertising and public relations master's degree programs.

Inconsistencies, hodge-podge and integration will not be enough if graduate public relations programs want to achieve accreditation. Beginning in 2006-2007, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications will examine more rigorously graduate master's programs for a focused knowledge experience. Professional master's degree programs will be reviewed separately from undergraduate programs, using the same nine standards applied to undergraduate programs. To achieve accreditation, professional master's programs, such as public relations, must also demonstrate how their master's graduates attain, in addition to practice skills and expertise, the additional core competency of "contributing to knowledge appropriate to the communication professions in which they work."

## **Progress and Change Since the 1999 Report**

Research for the Commission's 2006 report included a review of public relations program graduate Web sites, telephone interviews with 18 public relations leaders and a quantitative survey of educators and practitioners. The PR leaders supported several types of graduate public relations programs rather than endorsing the MBA degree or dismissing public relations graduate education as unnecessary. They felt that graduate education should be interdisciplinary, combining public relations, communication and management courses.

The Commission's quantitative study tested several options for graduate education. More than 60 percent of practitioners and educators sampled agreed that graduate public relations education should be an academic area of study with interdisciplinary focus (communication, management and behavioral science), or an academic area with a management focus. The survey participants' opinions reflected three different, but also overlapping, profiles that the Commission labeled the academic disciplinary

focus, the academic focus and the professional focus. Few participants said that no graduate education was needed.

In 2006, practitioner respondents in the Commission's qualitative survey recognized trends that were driving public relations that were not as important in 1999: rapidly chang-

*The Commission highly recommends that students entering master's programs in public relations have professional public relations experience.*

ing new media; transparency and accountability demands; recognition of PR's increasing value by top management; the need and demand for measurement; globalization; diversity; ethics issues and credibility crises; more multi-disciplinarity and integrated communication; and the need to align public relations with business strategy and social demographic changes. This research suggests that graduate education should move toward understanding business, management and public relations as strategic management functions.

Therefore, the Commission's 2006 recommendations for graduate education provide revised content areas and three different graduate curriculum models.

## 2006 Recommendations

Master's Level Education

### 1. Revised Content Areas

The following content areas should be the focus of advanced, intensive study at the graduate level. The expectation is that students will develop abilities to critically analyze and synthesize the body of knowledge in strategic public relations management by producing critical essays and original research projects that will enhance their professional performance.

The student should master the following content areas beyond undergraduate competencies:

- ◆ **Public relations theory and concepts.** This area should familiarize students with the leading theories of public relations scholarship (e.g., public relations, rhetorical, communication and management). Content should address such topics as the four dimensions of public relations, public relations roles and strategic management of public relations. This area should include public relations history, contemporary issues and trends (e.g., encroachment, feminization of the field, diversity, integration) and practice challenges (e.g., social, political and economic and global influences).
- ◆ **Public relations law.** This area should address regulations and laws that affect the practice of public relations. Content should include constitutional restrictions on freedom of expression and federal and state laws and regulations dealing with such matters as copyright, defamation, privacy and commercial speech. Understanding of contracts, affirmative action and Equal Opportunity laws and other regulations affecting the management of public relations also should be addressed.
- ◆ **Public relations ethics.** This area should address the philosophical and practical aspects of public relations ethics. Content should include such topics as philosophical foundations, principles and codes, professionalism, accountability, divided loyalties, responsible advocacy, social responsibility, global ethics, political correctness and truth and transparency.
- ◆ **Global public relations.** This area should address public relations practice in the international and transnational environment, covering global trends and topics such as multicultural communication knowledge and skills, public diplomacy, multiple cultures and diversity within nations, international legal

and ethical codes and political systems.

- ◆ **Public relations applications.** This area should familiarize students with public relations practice in corporate, government and nonprofit settings. Content also might provide for specialization in practice areas such as health care, politics, business, technology, environmental and multicultural and global public relations.
- ◆ **Public relations management.** This area should cover all aspects of strategic public relations management, including principles, planning, organizing, evaluating, staffing, counseling, leadership, leading in inclusive settings and budgeting. Content should include reputation management, integrated practices, concepts of organizational effectiveness, organizational policymaking, issues and crisis management, relationship-building with internal/external publics, activism and mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution. This area should consider how public relations is managed in a diverse world of politics, economic systems and distinct cultural voices. Diversity management involves human resources, staffing, team, vendor and personnel functions. It requires knowledge of global and local social, political, economic and historical frameworks, policies and laws. Content should include theories and principles of diversity such as power and identity; international, intercultural, multicultural and cross-cultural communication; and multicultural marketing.
- ◆ **Public relations research.** This area should include the application of social science research to the planning, implementation and evaluation of strategic public relations practices. Students should gain familiarity with quantitative and qualitative research methods, experimental design, sampling, data analysis, report writing, research ethics and challenges of researching minority groups.
- ◆ **Public relations programming and production.** This area should include advanced principles and practice techniques, particularly those related to the use of new technology, the Internet and telecommunication. Students should become proficient in research-based strategic planning, audience analysis, message development and design and distribution channels.
- ◆ **Public relations publics.** This area should include studies of publics and their relational interests in and consequences on organizations. Students should learn the situational theory of publics; activism theory; and theories of power, risk communication, crisis communication, relationship and relationship management, identity, gender, culture and other dimensions of diversity.
- ◆ **Communication processes.** In this area, students should learn theories and practices of communication (organizational, interpersonal, intercultural, small group, persuasion, rhetorical and conflict resolution).
- ◆ **Management sciences.** This area should include accounting, finance, management, marketing, diversity management and strategic integrated communication applications.
- ◆ **Behavioral sciences.** This area should acquaint students with social psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology and political science. Content should be designed to help students develop an understanding of group behavior, behavioral change, organizational culture and relationships.
- ◆ **Internship or practicum experience.** Graduate students should obtain and build their strategic management skills through project assignments as well as in internship and practicum experiences. Whenever possible, assignments requiring students to work in environments different from their own social group should be completed. They should receive supervisory mentoring and also appraisals of their work. They also should produce academic work, such as papers, journal

entries or essays about their experiences for review by their academic advisers.

- ◆ **Thesis and/or capstone project and/or comprehensive exam.** The thesis should represent scholarly research to test public relations theory, with the assistance of a faculty advisory

*The production of doctoral graduates has not kept pace with the need either in education or the profession.*

committee (6 credits). The capstone project should also include original research but with a “deliverable” to advance the practice of public relations (3 credits). A comprehensive exam generally asks the student to provide closed-book essay answers on course content in a four-hour time period. No credit hours should be awarded for comprehensive examinations.

## 2. Master's Program Models

These three program models assume that the master's student has an undergraduate degree in public relations or a substantial skills-and-knowledge foundation in public relations. Students who do not have requisite undergraduate preparation should complete foundational undergraduate coursework before entering public relations master's programs. The Commission highly recommends that students entering master's programs in public relations have professional public relations experience.

Courses are listed for each model that provide the requisite content.

### MODEL A

(This model focuses the student on preparing to enter a doctoral program.)

- Public relations management
- Public relations publics
- Global public relations

- Ethics and philosophy in public relations
- Research methods in communication
- Research design in public relations
- Theories of communication
- Two electives (recommended that these be management courses)
- Thesis

### MODEL B

(This model provides advanced career preparation through coursework in public relations and management disciplines.)

- Public relations theory
- Public relations law and ethics
- Public relations research methods
- Public relations management
- Accounting
- Finance
- Marketing
- Strategic planning
- Two electives
- Thesis or capstone project

### MODEL C

(This model provides studies for a specialization in public relations. It provides an interdisciplinary course of study by bringing in content from other disciplines into public relations courses and through collateral electives.)

- Strategic PR in a digital environment
- Strategic PR research and evaluation
- Strategic PR management
- PR law and ethics
- Organizational communication
- Strategic media relations
- Strategic PR in global, multicultural and diverse environments
- Strategic PR campaign design and implementation
- Collateral Electives (two courses in one area such as nonprofit/public sector management,



environmental policy, business/management, corporate public relations, international marketing or management, sports management, public affairs, educational institutions management, entertainment, health communication or other appropriate area)

The Commission's research findings that show a preference for graduate education that is interdisciplinary and management- or business-focused will require public relations programs to work with different academic units, such as business schools, to deliver these curricula. Faculty and practitioners agree on the importance of supervised experience. However, the ability of the student; the nature of the program and its home institution; the availability of opportunities within a reasonable distance from the college/university; and other issues have contributed to a great variety in students' experience.

#### Doctoral Education

The production of doctoral graduates has not kept pace with the need, either in education or in the practice. Many teaching positions at universities where educators are required to have doctoral degrees remain unfilled. Since the 1999 Commission report, the scarcity of public relations professors with Ph.D.s has only increased. Hallahan (*PR Tactics*, 2003) reported that "a Ph.D. is required at better universities for both hiring and tenure. Colleges are under increased scrutiny from their regional accrediting agencies to demonstrate institutional quality. Two frequently used metrics are the percentage of Ph.D.s on the faculty and the quantity and quality of faculty research in scholarly journals." This trend suggests that public relations educators will be sought for their academic credentials first with less interest in their professional experience. But faculty also need to know how public relations is practiced. The Commission recommends seeking increased partnerships with professionals and professional organizations to help educators stay current with the practice of public relations.

Here are some of the challenges to be con-

fronted in graduate education:

- ◆ Lack of understanding of public relations on the part of society and within academia, creating disconnects in communication and interdisciplinary cooperation, particularly in relation to the understanding of ethical requirements and social responsibility of public relations performance.
- ◆ Growing complexity of a behavioral, communication and business management knowledge base that requires time and resources to research and access before connections can be accurately identified.
- ◆ Need for greater interaction among practitioners and educators to foster unity and identity and to facilitate mutual understanding of the profession's evolving educational and research needs.
- ◆ Limited visibility of the profession within academia due to lack of economic support for the profession's research and educational needs.

To meet these challenges, the Commission recommends:

- ◆ The development of additional doctoral programs where undergraduate and master's degree public relations program strength and faculties exist.
- ◆ The identification of Ph.D. degrees specifically in public relations, particularly in colleges or schools with existing graduate program strength in public relations.
- ◆ The creation of additional endowed chairs in public relations that will allow increased graduate student direction and research productivity.
- ◆ Continued progress toward the development of interdisciplinary graduate programs.
- ◆ Professional encouragement of the development of specializations within public relations through financial support where

## GRADUATE EDUCATION

institutional and program strengths exist for the specialization.

- ◆ The creation of “distinguished visiting lecture-ship” positions that will enable the employment of top practitioners in public relations programs.
- ◆ Increased financial support for research that will enable more qualitative and quantitative research.
- ◆ The creation of “faculty fellowships” at cor-

porations and public relations firms that will enable practitioners to increase their knowledge of research and education needs and that facilitate cooperative research between educators and practitioners.

- ◆ The creation of competitive management level traineeships for master’s and doctoral students of public relations within public relations firms, corporations, nonprofit organizations and governments.

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### Notes

Hallahan, Kirk, ([http://www.prsa.org/\\_Publications/magazines/0803spot4.asp](http://www.prsa.org/_Publications/magazines/0803spot4.asp), accessed May 9, 2006).



# Supervised Experience

Perhaps no one aspect of public relations education has generated more discussion and diversity of implementation than the recommended “supervised work experience.”

The models recommended were built applying flexible time and content delivery designs that permit students to access courses in other academic disciplines. Too, in offering the course in distance learning or weekend formats, management faculty, for example, could teach business courses to public relations students. This section briefly describes the nature of the supervised work experience (internship), presents several issues surrounding differences in the manner in which programs define this experience and offers recommendations for such experience.

## **Summary of Recommendations in Previous Commission Reports**

Two previous Commission reports (1987 and 1999) included “supervised experience” as one of the core courses in their recommended undergraduate curricula. *A Port of Entry* (1999) asserted that it was “... imperative that public relations students have the opportunity to apply the skills and principles they learn to the professional arena.”

Three qualities were included to describe the experience:

1. cooperatively supervised by a practitioner and a faculty member;
2. learning objectives guide the experience;
3. consistent and continuous evaluation of the performance of the student during the experience.

Given those qualities, the report noted that when public relations students undertake an internship, they should (a) know the faculty and practitioner supervisor, (b) create objectives for the learning and professional performance that are understood and agreed to by both supervisors and (c) have the benefit of continuous assessment of their work by their supervisors throughout the internship.

Supervised work experience for graduate students assumed lesser importance than for undergraduates in the 1999 report. Specifically, supervised instruction was a complement, or an alternative, to a comprehensive examination. If undertaken, however, the three qualities

guiding the undergraduate work experience also were applicable to a graduate internship.

The flexibility permitted in the previous reports has led to considerable variety in work experiences, depending upon how institutions addressed several issues. Some of those issues have included:

- ◆ Is completion of an internship a condition for graduation? Should an internship be required of all public relations students?
- ◆ Should a supervised work experience be counted as an internship only if credit is given?
- ◆ Should credit be permitted for more than one internship and should more than one internship be counted toward graduation requirements?
- ◆ If the work experience is unpaid, should it count as a for-credit internship?
- ◆ Is securing work experience the responsibility of the student or the college/university?
- ◆ Should part-time work be counted as “supervised work experience”?
- ◆ If the student is paid (i.e., receives an hourly wage or stipend), is the student an employee of the employing organization or a student of the university?
- ◆ If a student is enrolled for credit, how should the experience be graded? Who should determine the grade? Is “pass-fail” an appropriate grading policy?
- ◆ Should it be expected that the student will produce a tangible product for the experience to be given credit? Should the student produce/create/design/write/conduct research appropriate for a professional portfolio?
- ◆ Should the student write a report about the experience in addition to supervisor evaluations and the accumulation of evidence of work completed?

- ◆ Should the faculty supervisor visit the workplace of each student supervised, and how often?
- ◆ Can an intern be “fired” by the practitioner? If so, does the internship count as supervised work experience?
- ◆ What is the appropriate title for supervised work experience: internship, externship, cooperative work, practical experience or some other label?
- ◆ Should oncampus work assignments be counted as a supervised work experience?
- ◆ How long (measured in hours, or weeks) should work experience last?
- ◆ How much credit should be given for internships of varying lengths: e.g., one credit hour for a set number of hours of work completed?

A variety of answers to these and other questions has led to a variety of methods used to provide students with supervised work experience.

### **New Research Findings and Analysis**

Research conducted by the Commission for this report reaffirmed the central importance of supervised work experience to public relations students. Practitioners surveyed identified it as the highest-scored essential ingredient of an undergraduate education. Educators equally valued supervised experience and credibility. Practical experience also was one of the top five considerations in entry-level hiring decisions. In short, the attitude of educators and practitioners alike remains unchanged since the 1999 report: supervised work experience is an essential part of public relations education.

However, some discrepancy between faculty attitudes and institutional performance was revealed in the recent research. The broad, quantitative research study conducted in preparation for the Commission’s report showed that while both educators and practitioners believe internships or practicum experience are a

highly essential part of public relations education, both groups judged the quality of internships as only “okay” at about the midpoint on a 5-point scale.

*Many educators and practitioners argue that payment for work increases the professionalism of the internship experience and rightfully recognizes returned value to the organization.*

A survey of faculty advisers to Chapters of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) revealed that fewer than half of the programs require public relations majors to complete an internship for academic credit. Yet internships for academic credit are encouraged. About three-fourths of the public relations majors at these colleges and universities typically complete an internship for academic credit. Furthermore, students in almost all the programs (98 percent) complete an average of one or more internships—for-credit and/or noncredit—during their undergraduate college careers.

Survey results showed that only 36 percent of for-credit internships pay students a stipend or salary, an issue of concern since students must pay tuition and fees to receive academic credit for an internship. Therefore, nonpaying internships for credit actually *cost* the student money. Furthermore, nonpaying internships—for-credit or noncredit—discriminate against students with financial need because they often must work to attend college and cannot afford to give up paying jobs to take on nonpaying internships.

Discussion about paid internships inevitably raises questions about nonprofit organizations, which stereotypically are portrayed as poor and

unable to pay interns. Whereas volunteer-staffed nonprofits with revenues of less than \$100,000 certainly would find it difficult to pay a student intern, many nonprofits seeking public relations interns have much higher revenues and multiple paid employees. Museums, colleges, hospitals and local chapters of large national organizations usually are far from poor. Reported annual revenue for some well-known nonprofits, such as the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Boys and Girls Clubs, Goodwill, United Way and YMCA, is \$1 billion or more nationally. And, while staff salaries at nonprofit organizations are below salaries in the for-profit sector, they still are relatively competitive. For example, a 2005 compensation study by GuideStar found that top program officers at charities with budgets between \$1 million and \$2.5 million (classified as mid-size) earned a median salary of \$62,700 in 2003.<sup>1</sup>

The 2005 survey of top executives’ compensation conducted by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* showed that the national presidents of the well-known nonprofits listed above earn more than \$300,000 per year.<sup>2</sup>

Another study found that the annual median salary of public relations directors for local nonprofits was about \$50,500 in 2004.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore difficult to understand why more nonprofits cannot pay student interns at least minimum wage.

A few additional points regarding public relations internships at nonprofits should be made. Nonprofits that are volunteer-staffed with revenues of less than \$100,000 are unlikely to have an employee with expertise in public relations or communication who would be a suitable intern supervisor. Academic credit should not be granted for such experiences.

A valuable resource for educators is the GuideStar Web site ([www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)), which provides annual revenue, number of employees and other information about specific nonprofits. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy’s* Web site

(www.philanthropy.com) also is useful for educators and nonprofit practitioners desiring to make a case for paying interns who want to work at nonprofits.

Many educators and practitioners argue that payment for work increases the professionalism of the internship experience and rightfully recognizes returned value to the organization. Some educators who responded to the survey believe that public relations firms using unpaid interns to acquire and maintain clients are contributing unethically to their bottom line.

A May 2006 Op-Ed piece in *The New York Times*, titled “Take This Internship and Shove It,” simply stated, “Unpaid internships are not jobs, only simulations. And fake jobs are not the best preparation for real jobs.” The author cited several studies relevant to this discussion, including a 1998 survey of employers by the Institute on Education and the Economy at Columbia University’s Teachers College, which found that “compared to unpaid internships, paid placements are strongest on all measures of internship quality. The quality measures are also higher for those firms who intend to hire their interns.”<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of opinions and studies, one basic principle of the marketplace should be kept in mind: Students almost always select the organizations to which they apply for internships, and organizations offering pay will attract the best candidates.

Results of the internship survey also indicate that availability of public relations internships is not a problem. Participants were asked to rate the availability of public relations internships for their students on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 representing “way too few” and 10 representing “more than we can fill.” The resulting mean score was 6.88, meaning that, on average, internship opportunities meet and slightly surpass the number needed.

Although more internships in general are not needed, students would benefit from an in-

creased number of internships with certain types of organizations. At the top of the list for survey respondents were more internships with companies and corporations, followed by public relations firms and government agencies.

PRSSA faculty advisers reported that typically only about two-thirds of the internships currently available to their students are “high quality.” When asked to name the *one* factor they believe is most important to making an internship high-quality, the overwhelming plurality focused on the internship supervisor and his or her availability, expertise and working relationship with the student.

Ranking second as a quality factor was students being given meaningful assignments and not being treated primarily as clerical workers.

The importance of the faculty supervisor’s communicating often and openly with internship sponsors was underscored by the study’s finding that internship coordinators generally have limited contact with students during their internships. The majority reported that the person coordinating public relations internships for academic credit in their programs has formal contact with the student only about once a month or even less frequently.

## 2006 Recommendations

1. The Commission recommends that sponsoring organizations of all types—companies, firms, government agencies and nonprofits—pay public relations students for internships.
2. The Commission recommends that academic credit for internships be reserved for workplace experiences that include an on-site supervisor knowledgeable in public relations.
3. The Commission strongly recommends that organizations, regardless of type, assign students to supervisors who will routinely and clearly instruct students and evaluate their performance.
4. The Commission recommends that educa-

tors make concerted efforts to communicate with practitioners—in person, by phone and/or by e-mail—to candidly discuss needs and expectations of public relations interns.

5. The Commission recommends that public relations faculty have a high degree of quality control in the administration of internships for public relations students.
6. The Commission recommends that, when faculty hold primary responsibility for coordinating internships, the work be credited as part of the faculty member's normal teaching load.
7. The Commission recommends that, when faculty hold primary responsibility for coordi-

nating internships, one instructor be assigned for every 30 students taking internships for academic credit during a term.

8. The Commission recommends that individual public relations educators and associations to which they belong conduct in-depth research to determine best practices in public relations internships.

It is hoped that research findings presented here and recommendations by the Commission will assist public relations educators and practitioners in their efforts to offer high-quality internships for their students. Doing so will benefit the public relations profession now and in the future.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> [Blum, Debra E. (2005, October 13). Female charity executives win big increase in pay. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. Retrieved September 12, 2006, from <http://www.philanthropy.com/premium/articles/v18/i01/01003501.htm>]

<sup>2</sup> [Executive compensation survey. (2005, September 29). *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. Retrieved September 12, 2006, from <http://www.philanthropy.com/premium/stats/salary/>]

<sup>3</sup> [Langer, Steven. (2004). *Compensation in nonprofit organizations* (17<sup>th</sup> ed.). Crete, IL: Abbott, Langer & Associates.]

<sup>4</sup> [Kamenetz, Anya. (2006, May 30). Take this internship and shove it. *The New York Times*, p. A19.]







# Distance Learning

While distance education involves any type of education that is delivered away from a main college or university campus, online education is the focus of this section. Online education now includes more than one million students in online degree programs out of the approximately 15 million total students enrolled today in higher educational institutions in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The Sloan Foundation's report, *Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005*, documents that online education has become part of the mainstream of university education. For example, the report includes the following findings:

- ◆ The number of students taking at least one online course grew 18.2 percent in 2004 to 2.35 million students.
- ◆ 65 percent of schools offering graduate face-to-face courses also offer graduate courses online.
- ◆ 63 percent of schools offering undergraduate face-to-face courses also offer undergraduate courses online.
- ◆ Among all schools offering face-to-face master's degree programs, 44 percent also offer masters' degree programs online.
- ◆ 43 percent of business schools also offer online business degrees.<sup>2</sup>

*The Wall Street Journal* reports that, despite the publicity focus on the University of Phoenix and other for-profit schools, it is the public universities that are going online "big time." According to Gary Miller, associate vice president for outreach at Penn State University,<sup>3</sup> "Public universities are moving into the online environment extremely rapidly." In fact, there are more than 51,450 students enrolled in the online University College of the University of Maryland, more than 9,200 at the University of Massachusetts and nearly 20,000 at Troy University in Alabama.<sup>4</sup>

Yet few public relations courses are currently being taught online in American universities. No complete undergraduate programs have been found online in public relations.<sup>5</sup> The six universities in the Tennessee Board of Regents system (Austin Peay, East Tennessee State, Middle Tennessee State, Tennessee Technological University, Tennessee State and

University of Memphis) come close: they have a five-course sequence of public relations courses available in their organizational leadership concentration for an online bachelor of professional studies degree. The five courses are the typical ones covering the suggested top-

... (I)t is the public universities that are going online “big time.”

ics in the 1999 *Port of Entry*: public relations principles, writing, research, case problems and campaigns. An internship is also available.

At the graduate level, there is no program that is totally online and entirely a public relations program. West Virginia University has an integrated marketing communication online program. Austin Peay University has an online master’s degree in corporate communication. The University of Maryland’s University College offers a master’s degree in management and public relations. Syracuse University has a campus component plus online instruction for its master’s of public relations and management. The University of Memphis has an online master’s degree in journalism with a concentration in public relations available.<sup>6</sup>

### 2006 Recommendations

To have quality online programs, several issues must be considered by public relations program administrators and faculty. These include resources (incentives, design and development costs), pedagogy and quality assurance.

*Resources:* University administrators must provide additional resources to develop online programs if a school decides to undertake the task of developing a program, either at the undergraduate or graduate level. While a single course may be done without more assistance,

public relations faculty members typically have heavy teaching loads, advising responsibilities and research agendas, which don’t allow extra time for many additional duties. Many major universities with well-designed programs and courses often provide teaching/learning-center support with instructional design assistance as well as production assistance for preparing materials for online instruction. But the university should also provide a teaching load reduction for the designer of a new online course. As an incentive, the designer often will also receive extra compensation, or a stipend, for preparing the course(s).

The intellectual property rights for the newly designed online course usually go to the designer/instructor. However, the university will retain the right to use the course, should the designer leave the university.

*Pedagogy:* Different skills and methods of teaching are needed for online instruction. Fifty years of research show students learn more when they collaborate with each other, receive prompt and trusted feedback, have more interaction with the professor and have more options of learning style. This can all happen with online instruction.

No longer is the instructor the key person; instead, the key is the student learner. Emphasis is on how to best meet the learning objectives of the course. The instructor is much more a course manager, rather than the center of the learning process. The more the student can be involved with the course material through assignments, online discussions and group exercises, the more likely the learning objectives are to be obtained. Typically, there are several students in a classroom setting who are reluctant to ask questions. However, with online classes, students are much more likely to be involved with the professor and other students through e-mail, discussion postings, assignments and chat rooms.

Online courses may not always be the ideal

choice for students, but are the realistic choice because of work schedules, home responsibilities and/or special needs. The successful online student tends to be an adult learner who is highly motivated, mature and focused on learning. In one major online statewide program, the typical student was found to be 40 years old and female with two children.<sup>7</sup>

Lessons learned from students taking online courses include these:

They tend to be motivated, focused and appreciative of the opportunity to learn, no matter where they live or how much they travel. Their work is often superior to on-campus students. The students often get to know one another better than they would in a classroom setting. Some material is even easier to master online than other types of coursework.<sup>8</sup>

Instructors report that class size needs to be small (typically 25 or fewer for a lecture course and 15 or fewer for a writing or graduate course).

At least weekly involvement and considerable contact with students are essential. The instructor and students need to be comfortable with computers. Courses need to be evaluated differently, and there needs to be a technology hotline for immediate help.

Regional college and university accrediting agencies require that the services provided to online students are similar to on-campus students. Lessons learned from administrators suggest these services should be the same or similar to those provided by these campus offices: financial aid, admissions, bursar, registrar and advising.

Opportunities for career counseling and other services also may need to be provided. Library services need to be available from a distance; therefore, students should be able to access electronic journals, databases and even books as well as interlibrary loan. Administrators must be prepared to deal with copyright and

other intellectual property rights issues. They need to provide incentives to faculty to develop courses as well as teach them and to provide instructional design assistance. Administrators also must provide oversight to insure that all programs, courses, instruction and faculty are able to meet accreditation standards when delivering online courses.<sup>9</sup>

*Quality Assurance:* The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools has led the way in developing standards evaluating online degree programs.<sup>10</sup> The other regional accrediting associations have joined together to use the standards developed by North Central and ap-

*Public relations education in the next decade will need to include online education in its mix of delivery methods....*

proved by all eight regional groups. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has developed guidelines for quality assurance in online and distance education. Various other groups also have developed online guidelines, including Blackboard, a major course management software vendor, and the Sloan Consortium and Educause, both educational-based associations which work with distance education issues and research. Problems in quality assurance that continue to be addressed include testing and evaluation, student involvement and quality of student services.

## **Conclusion**

Public relations education in the next decade will need to include online education in its mix of delivery methods if it is to keep pace

with the rest of professional education. Professional education has led the way in online programs because the demand among the adult learners (persons 25 years old and older) is for those programs. Business, education and health care are those areas most in demand by the adult student.<sup>11</sup> Those are the programs most offered, not only by for-profit institutions

such as Phoenix and Strayer, but also by traditional state and private colleges and universities. The traditional higher education system has been slower to enter into online education, but is now moving into it much more rapidly because of the public demand for quality online education from credible higher educational institutions.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Carol Aslanian, higher education consultant, presentation at Association for Continuing Higher Education, Region VII Annual Convention, Fort Worth, TX, April 21, 2006.
- <sup>2</sup> The Sloan Consortium, "Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005."
- <sup>3</sup> Daniel Golden, "Degrees@StateU.edu," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, May 9, 2006.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Survey done by Dan Lattimore of all PRSSA schools, Spring 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Regents Online Degree Programs, Tennessee Board of Regents, Nashville, TN.
- <sup>8</sup> Dan Lattimore, "Regents Online Degree Programs: What We've Learned," ETHED Conference, Nashville, TN, April 2003.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> [http://www.ncahlc.org/download/Best\\_Pract\\_DEd.pdf](http://www.ncahlc.org/download/Best_Pract_DEd.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> Aslanian, April 21, 2006.



# Governance and Academic Support

Public relations education has evolved within the United States largely as a part of programs in journalism and mass communication or within departments of communication studies. Programs with strength in journalistic writing were logical areas for public relations program development, as were programs with strength in organizational communication.

In organizational structures, the relationship between the manager of the public relations program and top management has long been recognized as a critical factor in the effective performance of public relations. Less recognized is the influence of where academic programs are placed within the management structure of universities on the ability of academic programs in public relations to respond and adapt independently to the needs of the public relations profession.

Public relations practitioners and educators need to understand the following relationships to understand the position of public relations education compared with academic and professional education programs within universities:

- ◆ Concentrations and sequences of study exist within academic departments. Control and administration are directed by a chair who is influenced primarily by the dominant coalition of faculty within the department.
- ◆ Although public relations faculty may have earned respect and consequently influence and even autonomy, public relations sequence and program coordinators may not have an official voice in the administrative hierarchy beyond what is awarded them by the chair or department head.
- ◆ Centers are frequently the next step toward becoming a department or interdisciplinary unit, and directors may have budget control, official reporting responsibilities and varying degrees of independence within the academic unit in which they are placed.
- ◆ Schools, on the other hand, are frequently the intermediate unit between development from a department to a free-standing college. They are normally headed by a director or dean, who has greater status within an institution of higher education than does a department chair. Schools may be departments (independent academic units) with budget and

curriculum control within academic areas, but not necessarily. Often, departmental identification may only indicate sophistication of academic program development, rather than individual academic degree program budget control by chairs of units within the school.

*The one dominant influencing factor at an institution of higher education will be the degree of outside funding support provided....*

- ◆ Colleges may have departments, centers and sometimes even schools located within them. If so, these academic units may have direct budget and curriculum development responsibilities and autonomy in the recruitment (and recommendation to the dean, provost or vice president of academic affairs or to the dean of faculties and vice president) for the employment and retention of faculty.

Other factors that substantially influence the development of public relations within universities and liberal arts colleges relate to institutional missions; the history of academic program development within an institution of higher education; the strength of the existing curriculum; the research and publication achievement of existing faculty; and the reputation of student and alumni achievement.

The academic backgrounds of faculty within the unit having control, and the professional and academic experiences of administrators at all levels within the chain of command, also may substantially influence the development of academic programs. These experiences may either facilitate program development or limit it. The development of undergraduate and graduate programs also are influenced by institutional strength or weakness in areas where public relations has interdisciplinary needs for

the identification of courses as directed electives, as part of students' liberal education requirements or for the interdisciplinary options that can be offered.

The dominant influencing factor at an institution of higher education will be the degree of outside funding support, or, in some cases, state legislative direction in political response to a profession. These institutional differences and variations make it difficult to prescribe a single model for the governance of public relations programs within universities. Instead, they point out two critical needs if public relations is to achieve status as a profession with generally accepted educational requirements for performance (one of the criteria for identification of a profession):

- ◆ Increased economic influence.
- ◆ Increased involvement as professionals and as a profession in influencing the development of public relations education.

### **2006 Recommendations**

Public relations programs must be responsive to the profession they are designed to serve. Following are steps that can be taken to increase responsiveness and accelerate advancement:

- ◆ Increased autonomy of public relations faculties in defining curriculum and degree requirements.
- ◆ Increased involvement of public relations program heads and their faculties in budget decisions related to their programs.
- ◆ Increased independence of public relations faculties in defining employment, tenure and promotion criteria and in making recommendations to higher-level administrators for new faculty employment.
- ◆ Increased achievements and visibility of public relations academic program administrators.
- ◆ Independent ability to communicate with and build alumni support.

- ◆ Independent professional identity of enrolled students equal to existing programs in journalism, marketing and advertising where they exist in programs of higher education.
- ◆ Greater autonomy in the control of admission standards within institutional mission guidelines.
- ◆ The ability to have independent identity and control as public relations faculties over the professional support received for scholarships, chairs, lectureships and public relations program support.
- ◆ Independent ability as public relations programs to define needs and program priorities and to direct funds in supporting student activities.
- ◆ Adequate staff and graduate assistantship support to develop and carry out programs developed by the public relations program faculty.

In view of these needs and the differences in academic institutions, the following management or governance structures are recommended to academic administrators and to professionals for the use in the next decade:

- ◆ The creation of Centers for Public Relations Research and Education within departments or schools where student enrollments man-

date the need for increased professional program recognition and public relations faculty control.

- ◆ The assignment of staff or graduate assistant support to coordinators of sequences of public relations sufficient for the adequate supervision of PRSSA activities, student public relations agencies and program development such as lectureships, conferences, advisory council development, alumni and professional development and communication.
- ◆ Increased efforts to involve leading public relations practitioners as members of public relations advisory councils for academic programs that help define involvement needs, recommend supervision structures and share achievements.
- ◆ Increased recognition at the national level for practitioner contributions to advisory councils at the institutional level.
- ◆ Increased support from national PRSA in creating an annual Education/Professional Advancement Day for PRSA chapter programs with recommended areas for panel discussions designed to educate practitioners as to the status and needs of higher education as well as how PRSA members and chapters can be involved in speaking up for advancements in public relations education.







# Faculty Credentials

The recommendations of the Commission's October 1999 report remain valid. But the critical shortage of qualified public relations educators has become even more acute since that report was published.

Qualifications for teaching public relations at a college or university generally include a Ph.D. degree. Those holding Ph.D. degrees who also have had substantial and significant practitioner experience are highly preferred. The Commission encourages those faculty who have Ph.D.s, but who have limited or no practitioner experience, and those without this terminal degree who are former practitioners, to pursue a range of academic and professional experiences that will familiarize them with both the knowledge and the skills needed in the current practice of public relations.

In addition to the academic credential of a doctorate, a broad knowledge of communication sciences, behavioral sciences and business, as well as considerable cultural and historical knowledge, also are highly desirable in public relations faculty.

## **Summary of Recommendations in the Commission's October 1999 Report**

The October 1999 Commission said the ideal full-time public relations educator would have

both a terminal degree (usually a Ph.D.) and significant practitioner experience. When this ideal was not possible, the report suggested a balance among public relations faculty, i.e., those who had terminal degrees and those who had substantial and significant practitioner experience. The report urged that adjunct faculty have both practitioner experience and at least a baccalaureate degree—with accreditation by a professional public relations association being highly desirable. The report further recommended that all public relations educators be actively engaged in scholarship or in professional and creative activity, in part through their active participation in practitioner and/or academic associations. Full-time faculty should provide the majority of public relations instruction in an academic unit.

The October 1999 Commission report recognized that the doctoral curriculum in public relations historically had been a specialized option within a broader program, usually in “mass communication” or “communication.” Such a theory-and-research degree would prepare public relations faculty to add to the body

of knowledge in the field. Faculty holding a Ph.D. also would be aware of the relationship of the public relations body of knowledge to other communication-related knowledge, e.g., interpersonal, rhetorical, organizational and small group, and would thus be able to integrate a range of knowledge into their teaching

*The critical shortage of qualified public relations educators has become even more acute... because of the increasing numbers of public relations students who are filling the nation's classrooms.*

and research. Faculty having such scholarly breadth also could develop competing paradigms of public relations that would be based on different metatheoretical and philosophical foundations, which could be shared in an interdisciplinary, multicultural and global context. Public relations faculty also were urged to keep current in their knowledge through "professor in residence" programs, faculty-professional exchanges, participation in professional development programs and sabbaticals in which they work in a practitioner environment.

The October 1999 report reiterated a recommendation from the 1987 Commission report: "Public relations courses should not be taught by people who have little or no experience and interest in the field and have no academic preparation in public relations."

### **Progress and Change in Public Relations Education Since the 1999 Report**

The critical shortage of qualified public relations educators has become even more acute since the October 1999 report because of the in-

creasing numbers of public relations students who are filling the nation's classrooms. Indeed, since the last Commission report, the demand for public relations professors with Ph.D.s has significantly increased. Furthermore, colleges and universities are being pressured even more by their regional accrediting bodies to fill faculty positions with candidates having Ph.D.s. As a result, public relations educators are being valued more for their academic credentials than for their practitioner experience, which previously might have compensated for the lack of a terminal degree.

The numbers of doctoral students planning academic careers in public relations is slowly increasing. Several existing doctoral programs have paid increasing attention to public relations education and some new public relations doctoral programs have been developed. Still, these recent efforts do not sufficiently address the continuing shortage of qualified public relations educators.

The good news is that scholarly convention paper presentations by junior professors and doctoral students are providing anecdotal evidence of a new generation of public relations educators who exemplify the ideal qualifications identified in the October 1999 Commission report. While public relations centers and endowed chairs at universities remain few in number, they nevertheless have helped "institutionalize" public relations doctoral education programs as well as attract students to doctoral study in public relations.

The shortage of qualified faculty and the paucity of doctoral programs in public relations are exacerbated by the growing body of public relations knowledge that must be taught in doctoral-level courses. Without enough faculty knowledgeable and academically prepared to teach this growing literature in the field, there is the danger that the growing number of baccalaureate and master's program students will be less than adequately taught.

## **New Research Findings and Analysis**

Public relations educators must be fully qualified to teach what students at the undergraduate, master's and doctoral levels need to know. Research by the 2006 Commission identified several trends for which public relations educators must adequately prepare their students. These include: the need for transparency and accountability; the increasing value of public relations to top management; the demand for public relations research methodology, measurement and metrics; globalization; an increasingly complex and difficult ethical environment; challenges to institutional trust and credibility; rapidly changing media; technological change; the increasing importance of internal audiences; and the need for organizations to integrate their communication.

Research by the 2006 Commission revealed that undergraduate students particularly need the following subject matter: writing and speaking skills, the fundamentals of public relations, strategic thinking skills, research skills, planning and problem-solving skills, ethics, fundamentals of how businesses operate, and a foundation in the liberal arts and sciences. Qualitative research indicated that students also need to learn about technological advances, the strategic function of public relations, multidisciplinary approaches to public relations, measurement in public relations, the integration of marketing and communication, globalization, the need for transformational leaders and an understanding of factors leading to the disintegration of civil society. Even though some of this content is taught outside public relations courses, public relations faculty are responsible for making sure that students master it.

Commission research suggested that graduate education content should move toward understanding business and management and public relations as a strategic management function. Subject matter for graduate study that was identified as important by the Commission's quantitative survey research included an under-

standing of the social consequences of public relations as well as its global harmonizing role, the economic contributions of public relations, familiarity with a range of research methodologies and an understanding of cultural diversity. Quantitative research noted that graduate students should be taught subject matter above and beyond that of undergraduate students, with content including: public relations theory and concepts, public relations law, public relations ethics, global public relations, public relations applications, public relations management and diversity, public relations research, public relations management, public relations programming and production, public relations publics, communication processes, management sciences, and behavioral sciences. Again, public relations educators must integrate into their teaching much of this subject matter and bear primary responsibility for student mastery of the content. Qualitative research found support for graduate education that was interdisciplinary, e.g., communication, management and behavioral sciences.

## **2006 Recommendations**

All of the recommendations of the October 1999 Commission report remain valid, but the need for adhering to them is more emphatic. The world and relationships among its inhabitants have gotten more complicated since the last report; and the public relations body of knowledge has increased geometrically. Qualifications of public relations educators normally include a Ph.D. degree, which prepares faculty for careers, not only as educators, but as scholars who conduct research using multiple methodologies to help to build theory that adds to the public relations body of knowledge. Of course, those holding a Ph.D. degree who also have had substantial and significant practitioner experience are even more highly desired.

Public relations faculty also must be broadly educated in communication sciences, behavioral sciences and business, as well as have

considerable cultural and historical knowledge. Such breadth will help ensure that public relations educators include in their teaching and consider in their scholarly agendas public relations as a strategic management function, with full appreciation of the internationalization of the practice and the importance of understanding diversity, ethics and social responsibility.

Public relations education should not be viewed as an “easy next job to which to retire,” because many colleges and universities that traditionally have not had research emphases are now requiring it from their faculty. Time will tell whether the practice of hiring “professors of practice” and others with practitioner credentials can continue much longer. A successful academic career increasingly will require a record of scholarly publication and national and international recognition in the scholarly commu-

nity. Without faculty who fit this model, public relations education programs won’t be valued because their faculty will be considered “second-tier.”

Thus, while the Commission believes there is a place in the academy for former practitioners with substantial and significant experience, those practitioners may be expected to earn their terminal degrees, i.e., their Ph.D.s, as a credential for becoming full-time faculty.

The Commission encourages those faculty who have Ph.D.s but who have limited or no practitioner experience, and those without this terminal degree who are former practitioners, to pursue a range of academic and professional experiences that will familiarize them with both the knowledge and the skills needed in the current practice of public relations.



# Professional and Pre-Professional Organizations

Students studying public relations in the United States have the opportunity to join a public relations organization before they are graduated. By becoming active members of a pre-professional organization or a student member of a professional organization, students begin to realize that they are part of something much larger than being public relations students on their campuses.

Together with their class work, involvement in such organizations helps them begin to see how and where they might fit into this profession. It also is the link between the classroom and their first jobs. And, by joining a professional organization's student chapter, students are provided with opportunities to experience leadership. Finally, such professional organizations give students the opportunity to meet public relations professionals informally, participate in professional development programs and make contacts for internships and later jobs.

## **An Array of Organizations**

The largest pre-professional organization, the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), offers membership or affiliate membership through collegiate chapters for public relations students. Many other professional organizations offer student memberships and

have student chapters to aid in public relations students' professional development. On an international level, students can join the International Public Relations Association (IPRA). And the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) has student chapters on some college campuses.

Many nation-specific professional organizations offer student memberships, including the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), which offers an associate membership to full-time doctoral students at a reduced rate. (IPRA's Web site [www.ipra.org](http://www.ipra.org), contains a list of many of these professional organizations.)

Several U.S.-based national affinity and specialization professional organizations offer student memberships, such as the Association for Women In Communications (AWC), which has student chapters; Hispanic Marketing and Communications Association (HMCA); Hispanic

Public Relations Association (HPRA); National Black Public Relations Society (NBPRS); National Government Communicators Association (NGCA); National Investor Relations Institute (NIRI); and the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA).

*... (P)rofessional organizations give students the opportunity to meet public relations professionals informally, participate in professional development programs and make contacts for internships and later jobs.*

Many states and regions have public relations organizations that also welcome students.

Two prominent academic societies provide many opportunities for public relations graduate students: the public relations divisions of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and the National Communication Association (NCA). Many of the associate members of the journalism organizations that comprise UNITY (Journalists of Color, Asian American Journalists Association, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association) are public relations practitioners. Depending on the proximity of the local chapters of these organizations, students should be able to meet local professionals and begin to make the transition from student to working professional.

### **Leading Organizations in Detail**

◆ **PRSSA**—By far the largest organization, with chapters on more than 270 campuses and a membership of more than 9,000, is the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). Each chapter is sponsored by a local profes-

sional chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Undergraduate and master's students are welcome.

Members join through a chapter at their college or university in November or March. Students at schools without PRSSA chapters cannot join; however, the PRSSA 2005-2006 National Committee approved a one-year pilot program for PRSSA Affiliates. This program was designed for those students who are interested in public relations, but attend colleges and universities that do not meet the qualifications to establish a PRSSA charter. Affiliates receive certain PRSSA benefits, but are not considered members of PRSSA. Schools without Chapters are encouraged to apply for a charter if they meet the criteria.

Schools with PRSSA chapters must offer at least five courses in public relations representing the core recommended by the Commission on Public Relations Education. They also must have at least one faculty adviser who is a PRSA member and a professional from the host PRSA chapter assigned as a professional adviser.

Students gather in the fall for the PRSSA National Conference held in conjunction with the PRSA International Conference to learn about the latest developments in the profession. They meet with professionals in plenary sessions to hear major speakers. In the spring, the students elect their national officers at their assembly and travel with others in their chapter to regional conferences. The regional conferences provide an opportunity for those unable to travel to the national Conference. PRSSA members receive copies of *PR Tactics*, the same monthly publication sent to all PRSA members, and their own national newspaper, *FORUM*. All members may compete for individual scholarships and awards at the national level.

PRSSA students can access the PRSSA Web site including PRSSA's listings for internships

and full-time jobs and they have access to sections of PRSA's Web site. Additionally, members receive an e-mail of news stories related to the public relations industry.

PRSA and PRSSA co-sponsor the national Bateman public relations campaign competition. Students, working in five-person teams, do research, plan and implement programs on their campuses on a topic announced in the late summer of each year. The top 10 schools are recognized in the spring, with the top three teams winning prizes.

Graduating students who have been PRSSA members may join PRSA at a reduced rate for two years. Also, the application fee is waived for them.

PRSSA headquarters is in New York. The URL is: [www.prssa.org](http://www.prssa.org)

- ◆ **IABC**—The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) sponsors chapters on 40 college campuses in the United States and Canada. It boasts more than 1,300 student members. Students can join IABC as student members in locations where there is no student chapter. Student membership is open to all students working toward a degree or certificate and not working in the communication industry.

Campus chapters enjoy the support of a faculty adviser, who is a member of IABC, and a chapter liaison from the sponsoring chapter. The faculty adviser can serve both roles for IABC.

Students receive the monthly *Communication World* magazine and *CW Bulletin*, and have access to Job Center and to selected parts of the IABC Web site. They are welcome to attend IABC's international conference for professionals at a special student rate.

Members may compete in the Student "Gold Quill" competition. This competition recognizes excellence in critical thinking, program planning and evaluation.

The IABC application fee is waived for graduating students who join an IABC chapter, and they receive a discount on IABC professional membership dues.

IABC headquarters is in San Francisco. The URL is: [www.iabc.com](http://www.iabc.com)

- ◆ **IPRA**—The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) welcomes students as members of the professional organization at a special student rate. It does not sponsor student chapters. Member students can access case studies, conference papers and *Frontline* articles from IPRA's Web site.

IPRA headquarters is in the United Kingdom. The URL is: [www.ipra.org](http://www.ipra.org)

- ◆ **The Global Alliance**—The Global Alliance, an umbrella organization that includes representatives of more than 60 national and international public relations organizations, also has an interest in developing relationships with student organizations. PRSSA is one such organization with whom the Global Alliance has developed a relationship. The Global Alliance member organizations from around the world have programs for students that vary greatly, but are nonetheless aimed at fostering a connection to the professional bodies in public relations.

Founded in 2000 and incorporated in 2002, the Global Alliance has grown to be the voice of the profession on a global scale. Through the Global Alliance, students in affiliated organizations can gain access to a network that reaches more than 160,000 professionals throughout the world.

For more information, please see: [www.globalpr.org](http://www.globalpr.org).

- ◆ **HPRA**—The Hispanic Public Relations Society of America (HPRA) is a nonprofit organization that serves communication professionals in the Southern California area. HPRA's mission is to provide career advancement opportunities for individuals from entry to senior levels

in the public relations, marketing and advertising fields. HPRA does not have a student society, but offers a student membership rate and a scholarship program to undergraduate students pursuing a degree in public relations or related communication fields.

HPRA headquarters is in Los Angeles, California. The URL is: [www.hpra-usa.org](http://www.hpra-usa.org)

- ◆ **NBPRS**—The National Black Public Relations Society (NBPRS) serves its members through initiatives such as career development and training, program enhancements, chapter mobilization, networking and scholarships. NBPRS does not have a student society, but offers a student membership rate to those currently enrolled in a public relations/communication program at an accredited college or university. Student members are encouraged to attend its national conference, which offers professional development, resume enhancement and networking opportunities.

NBPRS headquarters is in Hollywood, California. The URL is: [www.nbprs.org](http://www.nbprs.org)

- ◆ **AWC**—The Association for Women in Communications (AWC) supports 38 student chapters across the United States. Serving public relations, journalism and other communication disciplines, AWC has a combined professional and student membership of 4,000.

Student chapters all have a faculty adviser and, where possible, a professional chapter liaison.

Students compete for scholarships through AWC's Matrix Foundation. Students are welcome at the professional association's annual conference at a special student rate and receive the quarterly *Matrix* and the monthly *InterCom* newsletter. Student members have access to job/salary survey data and the Career Center on AWC's Web site.

Students have the option of affiliating with a

student chapter (where available) or a professional chapter. And graduating student members can join AWC without paying the application fee.

AWC headquarters is in Severna Park, Maryland. The URL is: [www.womcom.org](http://www.womcom.org)

### Other Professional Opportunities for Students

- ◆ **Student-Run Firms**—Any college or university can start a student-run firm. The idea is to allow students to work in groups to tackle real problems and opportunities for local clients. Some universities, such as Howard University, have incorporated their student firms into their curricula. However, most student-run firms are operated through PRSSA chapters. PRSSA promotes this within its chapters and annually gives an award for the best student-run firm. PRSSA offers a national affiliation for qualifying chapter firms. Some clients pay for the firm's services; other projects are done pro-bono. Information on how to begin a student firm is available at [www.prssa.org](http://www.prssa.org). Other information that would aid in developing a public relations firm is available from the Council of Public Relations Firms, which is a trade association for public relations agencies, [www.prfirms.org](http://www.prfirms.org).

- ◆ **Other Student Opportunities**—Many other professional organizations offer professional development, scholarships and awards for students, even though they may not offer student memberships. An example is The LaGrant Foundation, which offers internships and scholarships to minority students pursuing public relations. The Council of Public Relations Firms offers resources for career development; *PRWeek* offers a student-of-the-year competition, and the Arthur W. Page Society offers students internships, a case study competition and other career resources.





# Program Certification and Accreditation

The Commission's 1999 report dealt with certification and accreditation processes of three organizations: the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) and the National Communication Association (NCA).

The latter's process is a self-help initiative, not a formal assessment of the quality of public relations programs. Therefore, this report deals only with the PRSA and ACEJMC processes, both of which are voluntary external review procedures.

The ACEJMC accreditation process, however, has undergone major changes since 1999. For example, ACEJMC no longer is authorized by the U.S. Department of Education to grant professional accreditation; rather, it is sanctioned by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). It recently condensed its standards from 12 to nine. The PRSA Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) Program has continued to expand.

## **ACEJMC Accreditation**

ACEJMC traces its beginning to 1945, when the American Council on Education in Journalism was formed to evaluate and accredit journalism

programs. Originally an association of journalism education and newspaper organizations, the Council broadened its mission to mass communication, including public relations, and changed its name in 1980. ACEJMC offices are located in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. It has no connection to or affiliation with the university.

ACEJMC accredits academic units that offer professional programs to prepare college students for careers in journalism and mass communication. The unit may be a college, school or department. Components of the unit, such as a public relations program, are covered under unit accreditation, but are not accredited individually.

ACEJMC accreditation is voluntary. The process begins with a letter from the chief executive officer of a college or university inviting ACEJMC to review a relevant unit. It then proceeds through four stages that usually span two

years: production of an extensive self-study, a three-day site visit by a team of two or more educators and one practitioner, review and recommendation by the Accrediting Committee and review and final recommendation by the Accrediting Council. Units must apply for reaccreditation every six years.

*Overall, only 94 out of more than 3,000 U.S. colleges and universities have public relations programs certified or accredited by either PRSA or ACEJMC...*

The self-study is organized by nine standards on which the unit will be evaluated. The site visit team, after reading the self-study, examining records and documents, attending classes and interviewing students, faculty and administrators, produces a written draft report in which the unit is found in compliance or noncompliance with each of the nine standards. Based on its findings, the team makes one of three recommendations: accreditation/reaccreditation, provisional reaccreditation (meaning the unit has specified deficiencies that can and must be corrected within two years, when a revisit will be conducted) or denial. The nine standards of ACEJMC accreditation are as follows:

1. Mission, Governance and Administration
2. Curriculum and Instruction
3. Diversity and Inclusiveness
4. Full-time and Part-time Faculty
5. Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity
6. Student Services
7. Resources, Facilities and Equipment
8. Professional and Public Service
9. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Starting in fall 2006, the same nine standards will be used by ACEJMC to assess professional master's degree programs (Ph.D. programs are deemed academic and, therefore, are not eligible for professional accreditation). ACEJMC will make separate evaluations of undergraduate and graduate programs, including separate, and possibly different, recommendations for accreditation.

A fact often overlooked by practitioners is that ACEJMC "embraces the value of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum as the essential foundation for a professional journalism and mass communications education." Compliance with the standard on curriculum and instruction requires that students take a minimum of 80 semester credit hours outside of the journalism and mass communications unit, of which 65 semester credit hours must be in the liberal arts and sciences. In other words, in an accredited unit requiring 120 semester hours for a bachelor's degree, public relations students commonly take only 40 semester credit hours in courses focusing on their major. Their education is well-rounded, with twice as many courses taken in such subjects as history, political science, sociology and philosophy.

ACEJMC now also requires that an accredited unit's students must be educated in 11 prescribed competencies and values:

1. understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communication;
3. demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communication;
4. understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;

5. demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
6. think critically, creatively and independently;
7. conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communication professions in which they work;
8. write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communication professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
9. critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
10. apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
11. apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communication professions in which they work

In addition, graduate students should be able to contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communication professions in which they will work.

The site-visiting team delivers its draft report to the unit administrator and the university CEO before leaving campus. After input from the unit reviewed, the site-visiting team submits a final report to headquarters, and the team chair presents the findings and recommendation to the Accrediting Committee at its annual meeting, usually held in March. Based on the unit's self-study, the site-visiting team's report and discussion, the committee votes and forwards a recommendation to the Accrediting Council. The Council makes the final decision regarding accreditation at its spring meeting, usually held in May. An appeals process is in place. All ACEJMC meetings are open to the public, and all votes on accrediting decisions are taken in open sessions. Self-studies and site-visiting team reports are available to the public upon request.

Site-visit team members are selected from a

pool of educator and practitioner volunteers who have served on previous teams and/or participated in a training session. Many are members of the Accrediting Committee or the Accrediting Council (members cannot vote on schools they visited as part of a team). In forming teams, ACEJMC is committed to recruiting members who are representative of the unit's various disciplines. An effort also is made to include a person of color on each team and at least one member who is not a Committee or Council member. Noteworthy for this report, ACEJMC recently cited a shortage of public relations professionals available for service on site-visiting teams.

The Accrediting Committee's 15 members are nominated and elected by the Council. Eight must be educators, and seven represent related industries, such as advertising, broadcasting, newspapers and public relations. The Accrediting Council currently consists of 18 representatives of 16 professional organizations (for example, the American Advertising Federation and PRSA), 15 representatives of five educational associations (for example, the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication) and three public members who are not affiliated with the field. Membership on the ACEJMC Council is open to all membership organizations of educators or professionals in journalism and mass communication. Dues are tiered by status as an education or industry association and by size of operating budget.

Representation of public relations in the ACEJMC accreditation process has increased substantially since the Commission on Public Relations Education's 1999 report—demonstrating laudatory response from practitioners to the Commission's "A Call to Action." For example, whereas only one practitioner organization, PRSA, had a representative on the ACEJMC Council in 1999, PRSA now has two representatives on the Council, and the Arthur W. Page Society, which became a dues-paying member of the Council in 2004, has one representative.

In other words, instead of one voice and one vote, public relations now has three voices and votes. (In addition, several representatives of educational associations on the Council have a background in and appreciation of public relations and uphold the interests of public relations education.)

Still, participation by more public relations professional associations is needed. In comparison, for example, newspaper journalism has representatives of six professional associations on the ACEJMC Council: the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Associated Press Managing Editors, Inland Press Association, Newspaper Association of America Foundation, Society of Professional Journalists and Southern Newspaper Publishers Association.

It is estimated that more than 1,000 U.S. colleges and universities offer courses in public relations, yet only 88 have units accredited by ACEJMC. In the absence of accreditation to stimulate and encourage sound education programs, public relations will remain a profession in name only.

### **PRSA Certification**

PRSA established its Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) program in 1989. CEPR is a voluntary program and, in many ways, emulates the ACEJMC accreditation process. Unlike ACEJMC accreditation, however, CEPR deals solely with public relations education programs and only at the undergraduate level. It originally was targeted at public relations education programs housed in units not eligible for ACEJMC accreditation (for example, departments grounded in the traditional discipline of speech communication), although, to date, few such programs have taken advantage of the certification opportunity. The program is administered by PRSA, with the PRSA board of directors making final decisions on certification.

The review process is conducted by two accred-

ited PRSA members, one a practitioner and the other an educator, who examine the curriculum, resources, facilities, faculty qualifications and university support that is provided to public relations education. On-site meetings are conducted with numerous stakeholders, including faculty, department and university administrators and public relations students. Calls are made to local professionals and alumni to learn their assessment of the program. The intensive two-and-one-half day review culminates in a written report and a meeting of the team with the academic vice president and/or the president of the university.

Successful programs are granted PRSA certification for a six-year time period. The process must be repeated for re-certification.

PRSA certification is based on program compliance with nine standards:

1. Public Relations Curriculum
2. Public Relations Faculty (Full- and Part-time)
3. Resources, Equipment and Facilities
4. Public Relations Students
5. Assessment
6. Relationships with Alumni and Professionals
7. Relationships with Total Unit and University
8. PRSSA Chapter
9. Diversity

Overall, only 94 out of more than 3,000 U.S. colleges and universities have public relations programs certified or accredited by either PRSA or ACEJMC; 8 are certified by PRSA, and their units also are accredited by ACEJMC.

### **Public Relation Programs Certified by PRSA**

Currently, public relations programs at 14 U.S. universities, 1 Canadian college and 1 Argentinean university (16 in total) are certified by PRSA. Half of the 16 programs are housed in

academic units that also are accredited by ACEJMC. The Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) programs, listed by the unit and university in which they are housed, are as follows:

- **Department of Advertising and Public Relations, University of Alabama\***  
Box 870172, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0172  
<http://www.ccom.ua.edu/apr/index.html#>  
Tel: (205) 348-7158  
Fax: (205) 348-2401
- **Universidad Argentina de la Empresa**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina 1016  
[http://www.uade.edu.ar/FRSET\\_HOME.asp?vPAG=HOME.asp](http://www.uade.edu.ar/FRSET_HOME.asp?vPAG=HOME.asp)  
Tel: (54-114) 441-1260
- **Department of Journalism, Ball State University\***  
Art and Journalism #300, Muncie, IN 47306-0485  
<http://www.bsua.edu/journalism/>  
Tel: (765) 285-8200  
Fax: (765) 285-7997
- **Department of Communications, Brigham Young University\***  
360 BRMB, Provo, UT 84602-6404  
<http://cfac.byu.edu/com/index.php>  
Tel: (801) 422-2997  
Fax: (801) 422-0160
- **Department of Communications, California State University—Fullerton\***  
800 N. State College Blvd., Fullerton, CA 92834-6846  
<http://communications.fullerton.edu/comm/index.html>  
Tel: (714) 278-3517  
Fax: (714) 278-2209
- **Department of Communication, Eastern Kentucky University**  
AC 108-EKU, 521 Lancaster Ave., Richmond, KY 40475-3102  
<http://www.communication.eku.edu/>  
Tel: (859) 622-1871  
Fax: (859) 622-8214
- **School of Journalism and Broadcasting, Western Kentucky University\***  
216 Mass Media & Technology Hall, Bowling Green, KY 42101-1070  
<http://www.wku.edu/Journalism/>  
Tel: (270) 745-4144  
Fax: (270) 745-5835
- **Department of Communication, University of Maryland**  
2130 Skinner Building, College Park, MD 20742-7635  
<http://www.comm.umd.edu/>  
Tel: (301) 405-8979  
Fax: (301) 314-9471
- **Department of Journalism, University of Memphis\***  
300 Meeman Journalism Bldg., Memphis, TN 38152  
<http://www.people.memphis.edu/~jourlib/>  
Tel: (901) 678-2401  
Fax: (901) 678-4287
- **Department of Communication, Southeast Missouri State University\***  
107 Grauel Bldg., One University Plaza, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701-4799  
<http://www.semo.edu/communication/>  
Tel: (573) 651-2241  
Fax: (573) 651-5967
- **Communication Arts Department, Ohio Northern University**  
Freed Center, Ada, OH 45810  
[http://www.onu.edu/a+s/comm\\_arts/index.html](http://www.onu.edu/a+s/comm_arts/index.html)  
Tel: (419) 772-2049  
Fax: (419) 772-1856
- **Communication Department, Radford University**  
200 Jefferson St., PO Box 6932, Radford, VA 24142  
<http://www.radford.edu/~spch-web/>  
Tel: (540) 831-5281  
Fax: (540) 831-5883
- **Department of Public Relations and Advertising, Rowan University**  
37 Bozorth Hall, 201 Mullica Hill Rd., Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701  
[http://www.rowan.edu/colleges/communication/departments/publicrelations\\_advertising/](http://www.rowan.edu/colleges/communication/departments/publicrelations_advertising/)  
Tel: (856) 256-4265  
Fax: (856) 256-4344
- **Corporate Communications Graduate Certificate Program, Seneca College of Applied Arts & Technology**  
1750 Finch Ave. East, Toronto, ON M2J 2X5, Canada  
<http://www.senecac.on.ca/fulltime/CCMC.html>  
Tel: (416) 491-5050
- **Department of Communication Arts, Valdosta State University**  
College of the Arts, Valdosta, GA 31698  
<http://www.valdosta.edu/coa/com/index.html>  
Tel: (229) 333-5820  
Fax: (229) 293-6182
- **School of Mass Communications, Virginia Commonwealth University\***  
901 West Main Street, Rm. 2216, PO Box 842034, Richmond, VA 23284-2034  
<http://www.has.vcu.edu/mac/>  
Tel: (804) 828-2660  
Fax: (804) 828-9175

\*Also accredited by ACEJMC

### **Units with Public Relations Programs Accredited by ACEJMC**

As of November 2006, 109 academic units at U.S. colleges and universities are accredited by ACEJMC. They represent only 25 percent of the 432 departments and schools of journalism and mass communication listed in the *2005-06 AEJMC Journalism & Mass Communication Directory*. Of the 109 accredited units, only 88 (81 percent) house public relations programs, as identified by a Chapter of PRSSA, which requires at least five courses in public relations to be chartered, and/or a proclaimed concentration of study in public relations included in the unit's entry in the *2005-06 AEJMC Directory* and verified on the unit's Web site. Further analysis of the 88 schools showed that, of the accredited units, public relations is offered at 25 that grant Ph.D. degrees, 42 that grant master's degrees and 21 that grant only bachelor's degrees.

There is substantial variation among the programs, particularly at the undergraduate level. Whereas some offer a bachelor of arts or science degree in public relations, others provide an emphasis on only two or three courses that lead to a degree in another discipline, such as journalism. Furthermore, at some accredited units, public relations courses are taught primarily by adjunct and nontenure-track faculty. In other words, not all accredited public relations programs are equal in breadth or depth. At the graduate level, public relations is almost always a specialization.

### **2006 Recommendations**

Regardless of the outcome of either the ACEJMC accreditation or the PRSA certification process, the value of self-examination cannot be over-emphasized. Reviewing the substance and pedagogy of an institution's public relations program provides insights and benchmarks, while offering opportunities for alterations and new directions. While the processes may appear daunting, the Arthur W. Page Society, PRSA, the Institute for Public Relations and ACEJMC regularly conduct training programs to increase the number of qualified reviewers and to instruct institutions on the preparation necessary for outside review.

The Commission recommends that:

- ◆ more public relations education programs should seek accreditation and/or certification to complete a thorough self-examination of the program.
- ◆ more public relations practitioners should volunteer to serve on site-visiting teams.
- ◆ more industry organizations, such as the Council of Public Relations Firms and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), should apply for membership on the ACEJMC Council. Representation also is needed from educator associations with large public relations memberships, such as NCA and ICA.



# A Call to Action

Without question, a prime hallmark of a profession is education in its principles. Law, medicine, accounting—all are grounded in formal education and training, strengthened by continuing research and given responsible support by individuals, professional societies and enterprises that have a stake in the practice and its reputation.

Such established professions did not spring full-blown from the head of Zeus. They have a long history of development and have, at times, been bruised by struggles to bring their professionals—both practitioners and educators—to a shared vision about what constitutes strong, ethical practice in service to society.

By comparison, public relations practice and education for public relations are still works-in-progress. Contemporary public relations education is still young, still searching for its “home”—and often its legitimacy—in academe. The first initiative to define a curriculum was made only 31 years ago. The field is still largely populated by practitioners who never had an opportunity for its formal study, thus learning their craft primarily from lengthy experience.

Inevitably, that picture is changing. Graduates from public relations academic programs are entering the field in increasing numbers. Many are products of the estimated more than 270

U.S. colleges and universities that now offer at least basic undergraduate study in public relations. As they attain positions of power and influence, their allegiance to formal study will be reflected in their support for education.

## **Current Levels of Support for Education**

But in the meantime, the need for public relations education is urgent and escalating rapidly, surfacing new issues that must be addressed and resolved. These issues present an increasing challenge to professional organizations as well as to individuals who practice and educate in the field of public relations.

While the record of broad support for public relations education by professional groups is growing, there is a critical need for similar action by individual practitioners and the firms, companies and organizations with which they are associated and in which they are influential. Yes, many practitioners are involved as mentors, classroom speak-

ers and advisers and are otherwise engaged in the educational programs of professional societies to which they belong. But too few are contributing financial support to public relations programs in colleges and universities of their choice.

*... (T)he need for public relations education is urgent and escalating rapidly...*

Too few are aware that budgets for public relations studies generally are inadequate in comparison to those for other academic disciplines. At the same time, the population of public relations students commonly exceeds that in other disciplines, making their faculty numbers inadequate. Too often, only one qualified public relations instructor is responsible for teaching and counseling 60 or more majors. Faculty frequently are “borrowed” from other disciplines, who are inexperienced and untrained for public relations instruction. There are meager—if any—resources for public relations educators to attend conferences and professional meetings to interface with practitioners.

At times, the administrator of the academic unit in which public relations is housed has no understanding of—or appreciation for—the expanding dimensions of public relations practice and its educational needs. Administrator perception of public relations is often limited to publicity, promotion and even production, rather than to strategic planning, research and building ethical, trustworthy relationships with constituencies.

At present, philanthropy for public relations education is in its infancy. There are too few endowed professorships, scholarships, lectureships and other resources. Although progress has been made since the Commission’s 1999 report, students and their education are far behind the curve of financial

support from the practice when compared to other disciplines such as journalism, advertising and broadcasting.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for Practitioners**

What are some challenges and opportunities for practitioners? Among them:

- ◆ Contributing annually to public relations studies at a college or university of choice.
- ◆ Persuading their employers to establish a scholarship, professorship, chair or resource center for public relations at a college or university of choice.
- ◆ Via their will or a trust, making a bequest to a college or university for its public relations studies or students.
- ◆ Engaging public relations educators for research projects on behalf of clients.
- ◆ Sponsoring educator-in-residence programs in their firms, corporations and organizations.
- ◆ Supporting paid internships for public relations students.
- ◆ Giving priority consideration to public relations graduates for entry-level positions.
- ◆ Working with educators, establish relationships with administrators of the units in which public relations studies are housed in order to build understanding of the contemporary practice and its educational needs.

### **The Role of Educators**

Educators also have an essential and unique role in building financial support for their programs:

- ◆ Cultivating public relations alumni to contribute financially to their programs or a particular public relations project.
- ◆ Nurturing relationships with practitioners and their firms leading to support for a public relations program or project.



## A Good Place to Start

Contact development staff at your *alma mater* if it has a public relations program. Otherwise, select a program from certified or accredited units. A list of programs accredited by ACEJMC can be found on ACEJMC's Website

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/>

A list of programs certified by PRSA can be found on PRSA's Website

[http://www.prsa.org/\\_About/overview/certification.asp](http://www.prsa.org/_About/overview/certification.asp).

A third option is to identify a program that sponsors one of the more than 270 chapters of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).

Go to [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org). On the menu under "About Us" at the top of the page, click on "PRSSA Chapters." You will get a U.S. map to

select a state and get a list of colleges and universities in that state with a public relations program. Clicking on a college or university, you will find the name of the PRSSA chapter faculty advisor with his or her e-mail address and a mailing address for the program. A link to the college or university's Web site also is provided. Either e-mail the faculty advisor or search under "Academic Programs" on the college's or university's Web site for the name of the person who heads the public relations program—preferably, a senior faculty member who teaches public relations and has a title such as coordinator. Contact the head of the program and tell him or her you are interested in making a gift. If possible, ask for an on-campus meeting.

*You'll be glad you took the first step!*

- ◆ Recognizing those individuals and firms giving financial support and who become exemplars to encourage others.
- ◆ Building a cooperative relationship with campus administrators, particularly those in the development office.

As other established professions can testify, responsible financial support of education must come from practitioners and their organizations. Such a partnership between education and the practice of public relations is necessary for its reputation and acceptance as a profession by both the academy and society at large.

### **Sampling of Major Gifts to Public Relations Education**

This sampling of major contributions to colleges and universities for public relations education

by individuals, corporations, firms and foundations will, the Commission hopes, inspire similar actions. The Commission hopes that practitioners will emulate the philanthropic behavior of these donors and that educators will reach out to the practice to forge relationships that make such gifts a reality. To the best of the Commission's knowledge, this is the first time such a list has been compiled and published.

The gifts are grouped in categories common to financial support for higher education. The listing is a sampling and is not intended to be comprehensive. Each entry contains five pieces of information in the following order: (1) name of the fund or gift purpose; (2) academic unit and university to which the gift was made; (3) donor(s); (4) gift amount or fund balance; and (5) year the gift was made or the fund was established.

## Endowed Chairs

- **Harold Burson Chair in Public Relations**  
Department of Mass Communication, Advertising and Public Relations, College of Communication, Boston University  
Burson-Marsteller, its clients, employees and former parent company, Young & Rubicam  
\$1.2 million  
Established 2003
- **Endowed Chair in Public Relations**  
School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon  
Anonymous  
Now \$2.1 million  
Established 1998
- **Ellis N. Brandt Chair in Public Relations**
  - Includes the Brandt Lectureship and Brandt Research Assistantship; established 2005Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Retailing, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, Michigan State University  
Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation (founded by the family of the former chairman of the Dow Chemical Co.)  
Now \$2 million  
Established 1989 as a professorship

## Endowed Professorships

- **Widmeyer Communications Professorship in Public Relations**  
Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism, West Virginia University  
Widmeyer Communications; Scott Widmeyer, Chairman & CEO (1974 journalism alumnus)  
\$45,000  
Established 2005
- **Hubert J. Bourgeois Endowed Professorship in Communications/Public Relations**  
Department of Communication, University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
Vesta Bourgeois (deceased)  
Now \$152,000  
Established 1981
- **Sloan Professorship in Public Relations**  
E. W. Scripps School of Journalism, Ohio University  
Jerry L. Sloan and the Ford Motor Company  
Now \$365,000  
Established 1997

## Endowed Lectureships

- **James C. Bowling Executive-In-Residence Lecture Series**  
School of Journalism and Telecommunications, University of Kentucky  
Joseph M. Cullman, III, retired chairman of the board at Philip Morris, and alumni of the school  
Now \$250,000  
Established 2000
- **Allen H. Center Distinguished Lectureship in Corporate Public Relations**  
School of Communication, San Diego State University  
Nancy Center, Allen H. Center, APR, Fellow PRSA (deceased), and the Motorola Foundation  
\$150,000 face value  
Estate gift 1991; Lectureship started 2000
- **Vernon C. Schranz Distinguished Lectureship in Public Relations**  
Department of Journalism, College of Communication, Information, and Media, Ball State University  
Ball Corporation, family and friends of Mr. Schranz (deceased), Indianapolis public relations firms and past lecturers  
Now \$70,000  
Established 1979; Endowed 1998
- **Albert Walker Distinguished Lecture in Public Relations**  
Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University  
Alumni and friends of Dr. Walker (retired)  
\$20,000  
Established 2004

## Endowed Research Centers

- **Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations**  
Includes John W. Felton Endowed Scholarship and John A. Kotten Endowed Lectureship; established 2006  
College of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Alabama  
Betsy Plank, APR, Fellow PRSA  
\$325,000  
Established 2005
- **Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication**  
College of Communications, Penn State University  
Ellen and Lawrence G. Foster, APR, Fellow PRSA (1948 journalism alumnus)  
\$300,000  
Established 2004  
Robert Wood Johnson 1962 Charitable Trust  
\$300,000, 2005  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
\$750,000, 2006

## Named Facilities

- **C. Richard Yarborough Public Relations Laboratory**  
(Used by students in the Public Relations Campaigns capstone course, the lab emulates facilities of a small public relations firm and includes a 12-seat conference room with presentation equipment, plus a workroom with computers, printers, a scanner and telephones.)  
Department of Advertising & Public Relations, Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia  
Friends of Dick Yarborough and the Georgia Chapter of PRSA  
\$100,000  
Dedicated 1995
- **Duffey Public Relations Writing Laboratory**  
(Originally dedicated to teaching public relations writing skills, the lab consisted of 17 computer stations and state-of-the-art instructional equipment. Public relations writing is now taught in all computer labs.)  
Department of Advertising & Public Relations, Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia  
Lee Duffey, Jr., and Jenny Deal Duffey (1980 public relations alumni)  
\$50,000  
Dedicated 2000
- **William F. Doescher Campaigns Lab for Advertising and Public Relations**  
(Simulates an agency environment where students can meet with clients, develop strategic campaigns based on research and create deliverables.)  
Public Relations Department, S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University  
William F. Doescher (1962 public relations master's alumnus) and D&B (Dun & Bradstreet) Corp.  
\$50,000  
1996

*... (R)esponsible financial support of education must come from practitioners and their organizations.*

## Endowed Faculty Professional Development Funds

- **C. Del Galloway Professional Advancement Fund in Public Relations**  
Department of Public Relations, College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida  
C. Del Galloway, APR, Fellow PRSA (1981 & 1983 public relations alumnus)  
\$25,000  
Established 2006
- **Sandra and Stuart Newman Professional Advancement Fund in Public Relations**  
Department of Public Relations, College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida  
Sandra and Stuart G. Newman (1946 journalism alumnus)  
Now more than \$33,000  
Established 2000

## Endowed Scholarships: Undergraduate & Graduate

- **Ann Barkelew/Fleishman-Hillard Scholarship**  
School of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Minnesota  
Fleishman-Hillard and Chairman/CEO John Graham, APR, Fellow PRSA  
\$25,000  
Established 2001
- **Thomas Bartikoski Memorial Scholarship in Public Relations**  
School of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Minnesota  
Family and friends of Wendy Horn and the late Mr. Bartikoski (1972 journalism alumnus)  
\$25,000  
Established 2000
- **Ofield Dukes Undergraduate Scholarship in Public Relations**  
John H. Johnson School of Communication, Howard University  
Kathy Hughes; other friends of Mr. Dukes; and Phillip Morris Companies, Inc.  
Now \$31,000  
Established 2002
- **Henry C. Rogers Endowed Scholarship**  
(for public relations master's students)  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California  
Marcia Ross and Ron Rogers, children of Mr. Rogers (deceased)  
\$100,000  
Established 2006

- **Paul Allen Bennett Graduate Scholarship in Public Relations**  
Department of Journalism, College of Communication,  
Information and Media, Ball State University  
Claire Bennett and the Indianapolis Public Relations  
Society  
Now \$60,000  
Established 1990

### **Endowed Funds for Other Student Assistance**

- **Rich Long/Dow Chemical Scholarship**  
(Assists a student completing an internship in New York City or Washington, DC)  
Department of Communications, College of Fine Arts and Communications, Brigham Young University  
Dow Chemical Company and family and friends of Prof. Long (deceased)  
Now more than \$20,000  
Established late 1980s
- **PRSSA Leadership Award**  
(Funds PRSSA dues for two student chapter officers and national conference registration for a developing student chapter leader)  
Department of Communications, College of Fine Arts and Communications, Brigham Young University  
Dr. Laurie J. Wilson, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Now \$9,000  
Established 1995
- **James E. Grunig and Larissa A. Grunig Graduate Research Fund**  
(Helps defray costs of research for Ph.D. candidates' dissertations)  
Department of Communication, College of Arts & Humanities, University of Maryland, College Park  
Dr. Elizabeth L. Toth and friends and former students of Drs. Grunig  
Now \$2,000  
Established 2005

### **Other Gift Purposes**

- **Weber Shandwick/USC Annenberg International Public Relations Fellows Program**  
(Provides scholarships to eight to 15 public relations master's students per year to offset costs of completing summer internships at Weber Shandwick offices in London, Hong Kong and Cape Town, South Africa)  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California  
Weber Shandwick  
Annual Grant: \$20,000 per year; \$100,000 committed to date  
2002 to present
- **The Rayburn Fund for Excellence in Public Relations**  
(Will provide stipends to cover expenses of distinguished visiting lecturers)  
College of Communication, Florida State University  
Colleagues, former students, and friends of Dr. Jay Rayburn, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Endowment campaign in progress: \$120,000 to date  
Announced 2006

This first-ever sampling of philanthropy for public relations education was made possible by initial research sponsored by the Champions for PRSSA. Comments or questions should be directed to Commission member Dr. Kathleen S. Kelly at [kskelly@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:kskelly@jou.ufl.edu)

*“Today, there are too few ‘angels’ supporting public relations education, but just a few can lead the way.”*

– Betsy Plank, APR, Fellow PRSA  
50-year Public Relations Executive and Donor



## The Members of the 2006 Commission on Public Relations Education and the professional societies they have represented:

**Dean A. Kruckeberg, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA**

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Co-Chair of the Commission  
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**John L. Paluszek, APR, Fellow PRSA**

Ketchum  
Co-Chair of the Commission  
Public Relations Society America (PRSA)

**Carl Botan, Ph.D.**

George Mason University  
International Communication Association (ICA)

**Clarke L. Caywood, Ph.D.**

Northwestern University  
PRSA

**Kathy Cripps, APR**

Council of Public Relations Firms  
Council of Public Relations Firms (CPRF)

**Kathleen Fearn-Banks, Ph.D.**

University of Washington  
PRSA

**Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, J.D., APR**

DePaul University  
PRSA

**Rochelle Ford, Ph.D., APR**

Howard University  
PRSA

**Terence (Terry) Flynn, Ph.D., APR**

McMaster University  
Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS)

**Steve Iseman, Ph.D.**

Ohio Northern University  
PRSA

**Kathleen S. Kelly, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA**

University of Florida  
PRSA

**Dan L. Lattimore, Ph.D., APR**

University of Memphis  
PRSA

**Marc Little**

BrooksLittle Communications  
Black Public Relations Society (BPRS)

**Jeff Martin**

Quorum Communications Inc.  
CPRS

**Francis C. McDonald, APR**

Hampton University  
PRSA

**Mark P. McElreath, Ph.D., APR, ABC**

Towson University  
International Association of Business Communicators  
(IABC)

**Dan Pyle Millar, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA**

Millar Communication Strategies  
NCA

**Debra A. Miller, Ed.D. APR, Fellow PRSA**

D. Miller Communications  
PRSA

**Bonita Dostal Neff, Ph.D.**

Valparaiso University  
Association for Women in Communications (AWC)

**Douglas Ann Newsom, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA**

Texas Christian University  
PRSA

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Betsy Plank Public Relations  
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Virginia Commonwealth University  
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass  
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**Jean Valin, APR, Fellow CPRS**

Service Canada  
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Commission Staff Liaison  
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