

PRF - 2001

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO
PUBLIC RELATIONS
EDUCATION



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COUNCIL of PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS

“A Student’s Guide to Public Relations Education”

2000©

Public Relations Student Society of America
Florida International University

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Foreword

“Public relations has come of age, and with that has come a critical need for broadly-based education that is relevant and connected to the practice.”

A Port of Entry: Public Relations Education for the 21st Century
Commission on Public Relations Education, 1999

If you are a student thinking about a career in public relations, this handbook will help focus that thinking. Written by public relations students at Florida International University, who have earned a national reputation for their community service, *A Student's Guide to Public Relations Education* is largely based on *A Port of Entry: The 1999 Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education*. It was developed with financial support and direction from the Public Relations Society of America and the Council of Public Relations Firms, along with guidance from Professor Bill Adams, Florida International University's PRSSA faculty advisor and former corporate practitioner.

The *Guide* is intended to provide you with ideas on how best to prepare for this fascinating and fast-growing field.

If you are a faculty advisor, guidance counselor, teacher, parent, mentor or friend, *A Student's Guide* has been designed to assist your good counsel to students thinking about their future.

For all who come to this booklet with an interest in public relations in the 21st century, welcome to a world of intellectual and professional challenge and reward.

Dean Kruckeberg, Ph.D.
APR, Fellow PRSA

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Introduction

Public relations has been dramatically transformed during the past decade into a profession with vast impact on society throughout the world. To prepare young professionals for the opportunities presented by that transformation, public relations academicians and practitioners have worked cooperatively on the Commission on Public Relations Education. The Commission's 1999 report, *A Port of Entry: Public Relations Education for the 21st Century*, is both the motivator and guide for this booklet.

This *Student's Guide* attempts to adapt information from the Commission's *Report* into a quick reference format for those who may have an interest in studying public relations and to maximize the potential of students already studying the field. As we know, every good plan must begin with good research, and a plan to achieve a career in public relations is no different. The *Guide* responds to the expressed desire of public relations students for some form of reference that answers their basic questions about their contemplated career - a field with an often confusing array of choices. It is intended to help steer students in the right direction, offering them a realistic perspective of the field and a roadmap for navigating the trip from student to professional.

We believe it's important that the *Guide* was written by students for students, because the Commission's *Report* noted "the need for dialogue with the groups of people who can and will influence (the) future." Today's students are the voices of public relations' future.

In this *Guide*, we have drawn on the work of those who have created the foundation of that future, particularly the 47 public relations professionals who were members of the 1999 Commission. They represent every segment of the field, including educators and practitioners in counseling firms, nonprofit organizations, corporations and government—via eight participating communication organizations. Their objectives were to identify the necessary educational steps to develop a competent pool of qualified professionals, to outline the requirements for recommended public relations curriculum, to profile the qualifications for public relations faculty, and to



increase support for training, scholarships and educational programs.

The Commission's primary goal was to design a public relations program that would meet the needs of students and educational institutions now and in the future. Many of the Commission's recommendations are based on a 1998 nationwide survey of public relations practitioners and educators. This study, and two years of meetings, e-mails and conference calls, produced what we believe is an outstanding set of recommendations for the public relations curriculum of the 21st century.

As members of Florida International University's Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), we considered those recommendations and then queried public relations students throughout the country to determine their most important questions and concerns. We also asked them to indicate what information about public relations they thought they should have been provided before they had begun their studies and what they would like to know before they begin their professional careers. From their answers, and from the information contained in the Commission *Report*, we have created this *Guide*. We hope it results in a more enlightened, better-prepared and higher-motivated public relations professional.



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Background

Ok, So What Is Public Relations?

Defining public relations is a difficult and controversial process because many people see it as simply news release writing, speech making or after-crisis damage control. One definition calls it "a process that encompasses anticipating, researching, analyzing, conducting and evaluating programs of action and communication." But public relations also includes counseling management, setting objectives, planning and interpreting public opinion and attitudes. One widely accepted working definition of the field was offered many years ago by *Public Relations News*. It explains that:

"Public Relations is a management function (that) evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance."

Public Relations News

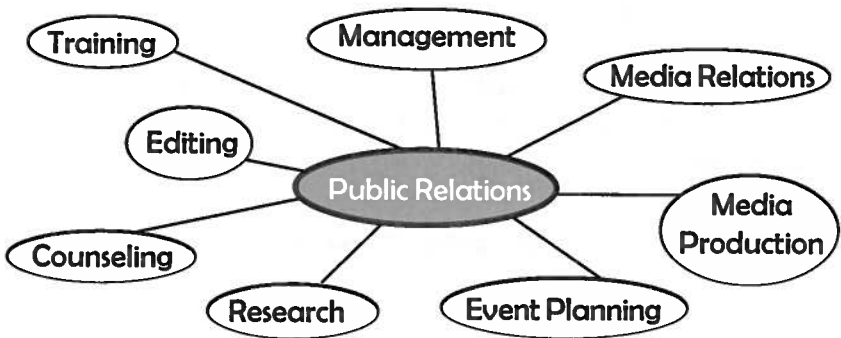
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Basically, the role of a public relations practitioner encompasses:

- Counsel
- Research
- Media Relations
- Publicity
- Employee/Member Relations
- Community Relations
- Public Affairs
- Government Affairs
- Issues Management



The public relations professional must also master the following skills:



However the various public relations functions may be presented, the bottom line is that public relations practitioners must be competent in several capacities and be capable of fostering mutual understanding and acceptance between the organizations they serve and their publics.

2 *How Did Public Relations Begin?*

Relatively speaking, public relations is a very young field; and, although its roots can be traced to ancient civilizations, its emergence as a profession is essentially a 20th Century phenomenon. Clearly, the strength of the practice today reflects the commitment by the public to participate in a free and open democratic society.

In 1829, President Andrew Jackson appointed the first presidential press secretary, Amos Kendall. In addition to writing speeches, state papers, messages and news releases, he maximized the office's communication potential by writing timely editorials that supported Jackson's policies in the administration's newspaper, *The Globe*.

Ivy Lee is recognized as a pioneer public relations practitioner who emphasized honesty and candor in the early 1900s, believing the best way to provide information to the public was through truthfulness and accuracy:

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“Our matter is accurate. Further details on any subject treated will be supplied promptly, and any editor will be assisted most cheerfully in verifying any fact. In brief, our plan is frankly and openly, on behalf of business concerns and public institutions, to supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which are of value and interest.”

Ivy B. Lee,

Declaration of Principles

(written to newspaper editors and publishers)

Edward L. Bernays, arguably the “Father of Public Relations,” devised and developed many techniques for influencing public opinion in the early years of the 20th Century. A grandnephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays coined the term “public relations counseling” in 1920, and in 1923 was the first to teach a course on the theory and practice of public relations. That same year, Bernays wrote a time-honored book for professionals as well as students, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, which is still used as the basis for discussion of the field in many colleges and universities.

“Public relations is not a one-way street in which leadership manipulates the public and public opinion. It is a two-way street in which leadership and the public find integration with each other and in which objectives and goals are predicated on a coincidence of public and private leadership.”

Edward L. Bernays,

APR, Fellow, PRSA

Public Relations Counselor

Doris E. Fleishman, Bernays’s associate who later became his wife, worked as an editor for the publication, *Contact*, which explained this new profession to American leaders. Fleishman’s early contributions to the field foreshadowed the influential role of women

as public relations professionals. At the dawn of the 21st Century, the majority of public relations practitioners are women.

In 1927, Arthur W. Page was named the first corporate vice president of public relations. As a corporate officer of AT&T, he introduced three important innovations to the giant company's management team: public opinion polls, counseling on how to react to public opinion, and communicating persuasively on the company's behalf. In 1983, Page was immortalized through the creation of the Arthur W. Page Society, a professional organization to which some of the world's top public relations people belong.

"All business in a democratic society begins with public permission and exists with public approval. If that be true, it follows that business should be cheerfully willing to tell the public what its policies are, what is going on, and what it hopes to do."

Arthur W. Page
Vice President of AT&T

21 Modern Day Practice: A Snapshot

The field has entered an era many call "the golden age of public relations." In the United States, public relations professionals are now employed by an estimated 6,000 counseling firms, thousands of corporations, some 500 trade associations and hundreds of colleges and universities. In addition to these opportunities, there are thousands of governmental positions, according to a report by the United States Office of Personnel Management. And still other public relations positions exist in hospitals, social welfare agencies, religious institutions, cultural organizations, philanthropies and many other nonprofit organizations.

More specifically, three phenomena have spurred recent growth in the field of public relations, especially in the United States. The growth of large institutions and their sense of responsibility to the public; the increased changes, conflicts and confrontations among interest groups in society and the heightened awareness of people brought about by increasingly sophisticated communications. Furthermore, the continuing spread of democracy throughout the

world—in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics—will continue to increase the importance of public relations as a field of study.

The quote that “the future began yesterday” is very appropriate as it relates to public relations, considering the evolution of the profession during the many years since Bernays' landmark contributions. Public relations professionals now help build and maintain relationships for their clients and are skilled, active counselors at management's decision-making table.

More and more public relations professionals are being asked to provide answers to many critical questions faced by management. With the changes in global business operations, corporate mergers, acquisitions and consolidations, the empowerment of public opinion within the global village—and the explosion of information—public relations professionals are increasingly recognized, not just as communication technicians, but as information analysts, facilitators, policy advisors and crisis managers.

Again, the key point: Public relations professionals are increasingly working as part of the management team, helping to make the vital decisions that determine the policies, procedures and objectives of their organizations. Public relations continues to evolve, embracing concepts such as integrated communications and issues management, aspects of the field noted later in the section “Outlook for Public Relations in the 21st Century.”

“Public relations has been part of every economic epoch, but usually in a support role. Finally, in the new information age, we are in position to move center-stage along with the other information specialties.”

Carl Botan, Ph.D.
Department of
Communication
Purdue University
Member, Commission on
Public Relations Education

Key Achievements in the Historical Development of Public Relations

While some researchers trace the evolution of public relations to Biblical times (e.g., Babylonians hammering out messages on stone tablets), this timeline attempts to offer selected milestones in the development of public relations as a field of study and as a professional practice.

- 1829** Andrew Jackson names Amos Kendall the first authenticated presidential press secretary
- 1889** George Westinghouse establishes the first corporate public relations department
- 1909** The Publicity Bureau, generally considered the forerunner of the modern public relations agency, is formed in Boston
- 1914** Ivy Lee, one of the first public relations counselors to bring honesty and candor to the field, was employed as counsel to John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
- 1917** Creel Committee established by President Woodrow Wilson to mobilize public opinion for war bonds
- 1919** Edward Bernays opens agency; uses term "public relations counsel"
- 1923** Bernays publishes *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, bringing the social sciences into the public relations field
- 1923** Bernays teaches first documented public relations class, New York University
- 1927** Arthur W. Page begins building a sophisticated public relations program for AT&T
- 1933** John W. Hill forms partnership with Don Knowlton, creating Hill & Knowlton, perhaps the world's first large-scale public relations counseling firm
- 1939** American Council on Public Relations founded; forerunner of the Public Relations Society of America
- 1942** U.S. Office of War Information created to help convey America's messages at home and abroad during WWII
- 1944** *Public Relations News* founded; considered the field's pioneer trade publication
- 1948** Public Relations Society of America formed through consolidation of existing public relations organizations

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- 1950** PRSA adopts first Code of Ethics
- 1955** International Public Relations Association founded
- 1956** PRSA's first foundation created; forerunner to the Institute for Public Relations Research and Education
- 1958** *pr reporter* is founded; generally considered to be first trade publication to pull communications theory and practice together for public relations practitioners and educators
- 1964** PRSA Accreditation (APR) program established
- 1968** Public Relations Student Society of America founded
- 1975** First Commission on Public Relations Education formed
- 1981** Friends of PRSSA created to support PRSSA programs
- 1983** Arthur W. Page Society formed; named for pioneer AT&T corporate vice president, an invitation-only group of top-level public relations practitioners and educators
- 1987** Second Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education formed
- 1988** Uniform Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations created; replaces Code of Ethics (1950)
- 1990** PRSA Foundation created
- 1990** PRSA College of Fellows created; comprised of senior-level public relations professionals, elected by their peers
- 1998** Council of Public Relations Firms created
- 1999** Report of Third Commission on Public Relations Education comprised of 47 professionals from education, corporate, agency and the nonprofit fields, representing eight allied organizations whose mission was to establish recommended guidelines for the study of public relations
- 1999** PRSA grows to 20,000 members in 114 chapters and 10 geographic districts
- 2000** PRSSA reaches 6,500 members in 220 nationwide chapters

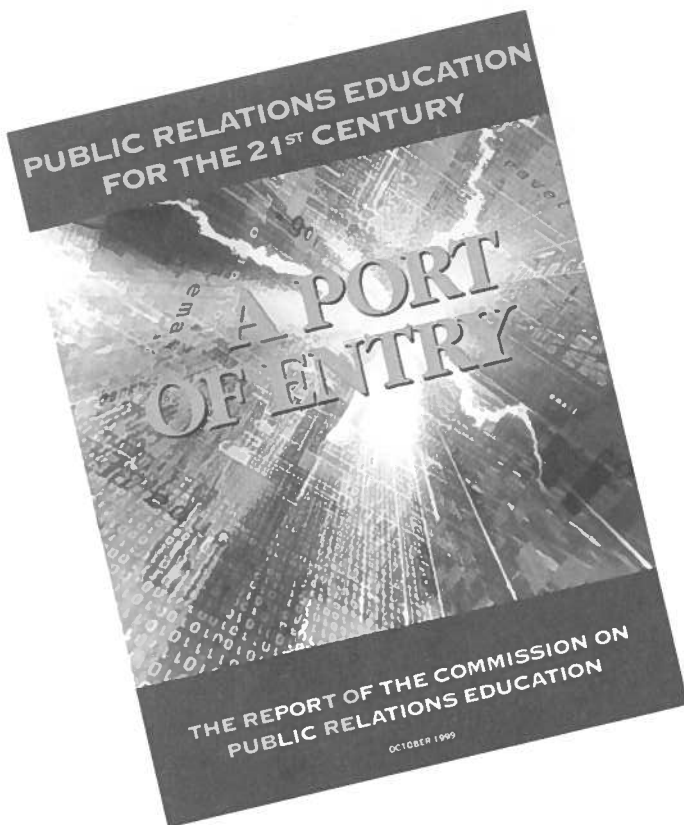
Adapted from a paper
*"The Emergence of
Public Relations as a Profession"*
by Dr. Melvin L. Sharpe,
Ball State University and
Betty J. Pritchard,
Grand Valley State University
with additional input from
Kathleen O'Neill

Importance of Undergraduate Work

How Will the Courses I Study Apply to My Career?

In your public relations career you will have many responsibilities that will require you to understand several subjects. Whether you choose to work in a corporate, counseling firm, government or nonprofit position, the courses you study in school will be valuable tools in the delivery of competent and successful public relations strategies.

As outlined in the *Commission Report*, "because of the interdisciplinary nature of public relations and the realities of its practice in society, it is important for graduates to be grounded in disciplines beyond journalism, communications and public relations."



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Students should be skilled in all of the following areas:

- √ **Research, including methods, analysis, recommendations, reporting, environmental and social assessment and understanding research statistics**
- √ **Management of information, including its role in the public relations process**
- √ **Mastery of language, both written and oral**
- √ **Problem-solving and negotiation**
- √ **Management of communication**
- √ **Strategic planning**
- √ **Issues management, including environmental scanning, issue anticipation, risk analysis and change methodology**
- √ **Audience segmentation**
- √ **Informative and persuasive writing for various audiences**
- √ **Area of emphasis such as community relations, consumer relations, government relations, employee relations, investor relations and media relations**
- √ **Technology and visual literacy (particularly Internet and desktop)**
- √ **Publishing and development of new media**
- √ **Message strategies and the design and layout of messages**
- √ **Managing people, programs and resources**
- √ **Sensitive interpersonal communication**
- √ **Fluency in a second language**
- √ **Ethical decision-making**
- √ **Participation in the professional public relations community**
- √ **Writing and production of specific communications messages**
- √ **Working within a current issue environment**
- √ **Public speaking and presentation skills**
- √ **Applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity**

Not all colleges and universities offer the same curriculum for public relations education; however, based on findings from the *Commission Report*, as well as PRSA and other credible sources, it's clear that certain components must be included in a public relations curriculum for students to obtain a proper foundation. Research shows (and educators and practitioners agree) the most important skills are still the ability to communicate effectively in written and oral form and to be able to think creatively and quickly.

According to the Commission, this is what an undergraduate public relations degree curriculum might include:

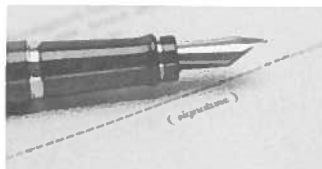
◆ Introductory Public Relations Classes

Generally, you will be offered an overview of the field. At this point of your program of study, you will usually make your decision about whether public relations is the profession for you. Some schools may offer this course during your freshman year, while others will make you wait until you're accepted into the public relations program, which may not be until your junior year.

This course will offer details on the theory, origin, principles and professional practice of public relations. It will also provide you with the basic knowledge of the nature and role of public relations, its history, the responsibilities and duties of a practitioner and an introduction to the various specialties of public relations.

◆ Writing Classes

Even in this digital age when the computer and the Internet have become a more popular source of information than traditional media (such as newspapers), the ability to write well is still a critical public relations function.



In most good communications programs, you will be required to sharpen your grammar and writing skills as soon as you enter the program. According to respected public relations educators and professionals, the most basic characteristic of a good public relations practitioner is still the ability to write well. Public relations writing is an essential skill that should address topics such as controlled versus uncontrolled communication, as well as concepts and models for mass, interpersonal and employee communications. Most students applying for internships or their first public relations job will be asked to produce writing samples or to take a writing test.

◆ Ethics & Law

Without ethics and credibility, public relations people have nothing. Establishing and managing your own good reputation is essential if you expect to help develop or manage your client's reputation. The Commission *Report* outlines what a course in public relations ethics should cover, consistent with the Public Relations Society of America's Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations.

Ethics can be defined as the branch of philosophy dealing with right conduct. Ethical issues are unavoidable aspects of one's personal life and such questions also will be faced repeatedly as a public relations practitioner. The PRSA Code of Professional Standards is recognized as a key standard by which members are bound, and it acts as a guide for their conduct.

The Commission *Report* adds that a knowledge of the legal implications regarding issues of privacy, defamation, copyright, product liability, financial disclosure, legal and regulatory compliance and credibility are important for the public relations practitioner and should be part of courses in Ethics and Law.

◆ Media/Publication Production

A solid understanding of media, media channels and the societal role of the media are also important, the *Commission Report* suggests. Regardless of your particular specialty within public relations, you will need these skills.

Developing skills in layout, graphics, radio and television public service announcement copy writing and event production can be key to gaining successful entry into a public relations job after graduation. Some of the responsibilities of the public relations practitioner also include creating newsletters, brochures, flyers and other media devices using current popular computer software.

◆ Public Relations Research, Measurement and Performance Evaluation

12 Ask some public relations students why they chose public relations as an area of study, and they'll reply, "because I'm not good at mathematics and numbers" or "I'm better at writing than understanding algebra." But the fact is that, even in public relations, you don't escape the need to understand numbers. According to the *Commission Report*, you should study and understand qualitative and quantitative research designs and processes as well as techniques of research such as public opinion polling and survey research. This means you should be able to read and understand statistical data; however, don't let a fear of numbers overwhelm you. (An understanding of figures is also vital for the interpretation of your organization's financial reports and budget because it impacts on your responsibilities as public relations director as well as the business' bottom line.)

It will be vital that you gain an understanding and appreciation for research content that provides insight to opinions about your organization, its policies and performance, and its public relations strategies and efforts. Surveys, opinion polls, fact-finding research, observations and performance measurements and communication audits aid the decision-

making process in the design and implementation of carefully planned public relations programs. As a member of a corporate management team, you should be familiar with the overriding theories of business and the philosophies of corporate culture including a knowledge of, or familiarity with, finance, management techniques and models, segmentation of audiences, development of budgets, contingency planning, tactics and designing strategies, analyzing problems and crisis preparation and management.

With this introductory training, supported by a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences, you will be equipped to begin an internship or entry-level public relations position confident of your abilities to handle any challenges this diverse profession offers.

◆ Public Relations Action and Implementation

This area of content includes actual implementation of campaigns; work on continuing programs (product publicity, safety, etc.); crisis and issues management; individual internships with a variety of practitioners; meetings, workshops and planning and implementing special events.

“The cornerstone of the successful practitioner is his or her education. Public relations education prepares students for careers across the business spectrum through a healthy dose of theory, research and practice. The capstone of each public relations student’s academic career should be an internship in the area in which he or she plans to practice; it’s where the academics meet the road.”

**Don Stacks, Ph.D.
Professor
School of Communication
University of Miami
Member, Commission on
Public Relations Education**

Internship/Volunteer Opportunities

What is the Importance of Internships?

The simple truth about public relations—or any job for that matter—is that employers will look for some experience even before you start your first position. The recently graduated unemployed student looking for that entry-level position may ask, “How do I get that experience if you don’t hire me?” It’s a classic *Catch 22* situation often solved by gaining practical experience through internships.

What is an Internship?

- In-tern-ship (noun)
- From the word - Intern
- Etymology: French - interne,
- Date: Circa 1879

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An advanced student or recent graduate (in fields such as communications, medicine or education) gaining supervised practical experience (as in a TV station, hospital or other organization).

An intern is NOT simply an extra pair of hands to get coffee or move furniture. It is crucial that public relations students have the opportunity to apply to the professional arena those principles and skills they’ve learned in school. In a formal setting where an internship is undertaken as a part of the public relations curriculum, these experiences must be supervised by faculty and practitioners who cooperate to provide professional guidance. These professional experiences may include: research, management of information, creation and delivery of written and oral communication, strategic planning, public speaking and presentation. Even an ‘informal’ internship, pursued for experience and not for credit, can help you gain the advice and counsel of your faculty and professional mentors, along with adding to your portfolio and resumé.

Why do Companies Have Interns?

Internships can help organizations develop a pool of highly qualified entry-level job candidates, while alleviating workloads for a more manageable and enjoyable work environment.

How Long Does an Internship Last?

The length of an internship will vary. Some companies are flexible and let the students decide when they feel they should end their internships; other companies may accept interns for one semester or during the summer.

Who Can be an Intern?

Interns are usually university juniors and seniors who have had the basic introductory course in public relations and in public relations writing, and who demonstrate a great interest in the field.

How Can Interns Help the Employer and Gain Experience at the Same Time?

Interns often draft news releases, develop media lists, conduct secondary research, pitch media, help coordinate special events, write newsletters and brochures, draft client correspondence and communicate with vendors. Interns learn by observing the practitioners, while giving management a firsthand look at their talents.

Importance of Building a Resumé

A resumé can be career-building, or it can be career-stifling. For employers, your resumé is a reflection of who you are as a public relations student or practitioner and as a person. A well-written resumé is key to securing an interview. It's a synopsis of your objectives and accomplishments, education, work experience – including pertinent internships – and extra-curricular and volunteer activities. You should be persuasive, but honest. Use action-oriented words.

Remember to check carefully for spelling errors and use a layout that presents an organized mind. Your resume should support a carefully targeted job search and be accompanied by a good cover letter that introduces you to your prospective employer. Briefly explain why you wish to join the organization, and state what special skills and related experience you have to offer. An effective cover letter can lend vital support to your resumé. Conversely, a poorly written one can eliminate you from even being considered.

Importance of Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering at various local, nonprofit public relations events, or assisting in the planning and execution of a public relations campaign or function, offers invaluable experience that would be otherwise difficult for you to obtain until you enter the business world. Public relations students who take the initiative and show an interest in gaining experience from established professionals give themselves an advantage when seeking internships and entry-level public relations jobs. Knowledge about the detail-oriented nature of event planning, the creative process involved in campaign development and how to manage a press conference helps the public relations student to appreciate the diverse nature of the profession.

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Want to Overcome That Catch 22?

We mentioned the *Catch 22* problem that some students face when looking for their first public relations job. If you want to overcome this problem, here are some points to remember:

- Experience builds resumé.
- Participate in volunteer opportunities at public relations events where possible, internships when available; these opportunities will challenge you and enhance your abilities.
- Keep your resume to one page.
- Print your resume on high-quality paper using a laser printer.

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- Target your resumé to a specific organization; highlight skills the organization could most utilize.
- Send your resumé out early in your senior year. Some firms begin early to narrow the list of candidates they may interview, so you have a better chance if your resumé is available sooner.
- Make sure to include a cover letter (proofread, of course!).

“Employers value most the internship details on your resumé. They look for the quality of your internship experience. So choose one that will significantly involve you in public relations. Do not be satisfied with one experience. Build your resumé with a mix of nonprofit, agency, corporate or government internships. As you complete your internships, document your results. Save samples of your work: speech drafts, video presentations, ads or news releases. And make sure you document your impact by creating a portfolio of your work.”

17

Bonita Dostal Neff, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Valparaiso University Indiana
Member, Commission on
Public Relations Education

Corporate, Counseling Firms, Nonprofit, Government, Teaching

Which One is for Me?

No one can tell you which area of public relations will be best for you. Just as a doctor or a lawyer specializes in a particular practice area, you will have to decide for yourself which area of public relations you find most rewarding. The only sure thing is that the options and the opportunities are numerous, and the choice is yours. The simple answer to what is right for you is to work wherever you find the most fulfillment.

Corporate Public Relations

The world of corporate public relations can be fast-paced, challenging and very financially rewarding. That's what some public relations students look for and identify as their dream career.

8 Corporate public relations offers the opportunity to work specifically for one company, handling the management of that organization's internal and external relationships. You will be required to have an intimate knowledge of the operations and activities of the organization, while developing creative strategies and programs to help achieve the public relations goals of the company. Corporate practitioners must anticipate long-term consequences of their companies' policies. They must balance professional crisis planning and response to social concerns with consistent awareness of their companies' responsibility to generate a fair return to investors while responding to the expectations of other stakeholders.

Counseling Firms

Life at a counseling firm can be more diverse than that of a corporate public relations practitioner. A major difference is that you may be working for several different clients and will be expected to perform a variety of services designed to fulfil each client's specific

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needs. Within a counseling firm, you are likely to enter as an assistant account executive assigned to one or more of the following account groups:

- Consumer Marketing
- Investor Relations
- Healthcare
- High-Tech
- Public Affairs
- Crisis Communication
- Financial Services
- Employee Communication

Your functions will include, but will not be limited to, compiling lists of print and broadcast media contacts, writing news releases, drafting pitch letters or making phone pitches to journalists, planning special events as well as researching and assisting in the development of creative campaigns for clients.

The account executive, senior account executive and senior manager/counselor are some of the other key positions within the counseling firm setting. The account executive/supervisor is involved more in the creative and planning aspects of the public relations program and has more contact with the client. Senior account executives supervise either a very large account or several smaller ones while a senior manager/counselor is responsible for the supervision of counseling firm personnel and the accounts they manage. This person also works on attracting new accounts to the agency and is often the “rainmaker” for the business.

Those interested in learning more about working for a counseling firm may contact the Council of Public Relations Firms through its website: www.prfirms.org or call 1-877-PRFIRMS.

Nonprofit

Working for nonprofit organizations has several advantages and offers numerous opportunities, but the financial compensation is generally lower than in other areas of public relations. Within a nonprofit organization, there is usually a small production staff that works with the public relations coordinator (or whatever the title may be), and the staff is ultimately answerable to a volunteer board of directors. Public relations people working in nonprofits usually have

a great deal of freedom to develop, design and implement programs according to their best judgment. These organizations prefer attractive, inexpensive, effective programs that require nominal amounts of money.

Promotional activity, fundraising, special-event planning, production of publicity material (public service announcements, brochures, flyers, newsletters) and preparation and pitching of news releases and other communication tools to the media are the primary functions of nonprofit public relations practitioners. The major objectives are to gain or strengthen public support (financial or other), membership/volunteer enthusiasm and professional confidence (depending on the type of organization) for the activities of the organization.

Organizations comprising the nonprofit sector are wide-ranging and include social services and health care, museums, hospitals and educational and research institutions.

Government

Despite the fact that the United States federal government is prohibited by law from officially labeling its public relations activities as such, our government recognizes the importance and need for publicity and reputation management and utilizes the practice in its federal, state and local departments. The names vary, but the job remains fundamentally the same. Some of the titles given to public relations practitioners in government are public information officer, public affairs officer, departmental assistant or aide and press secretary.

Political candidates running for office frequently employ public relations practitioners to help them during their campaigns and often after they are elected to handle image issues, develop strategies, write speeches or aid with publicity. Thus, the advice of a skilled public relations person is arguably as essential as legal counsel, and a professional may be paid premium dollars for his or her skills.

Lobbyists are often public relations specialists, and their special skills in communication and persuasion make them important

and valuable partners of government's public affairs activities. These professionals may work with members of the U.S. Congress as lobbyists for issues they are promoting or as lobbyists representing particular industries, individual companies or special interests. The lobbyist's job includes working closely with various legislators or regulators, and their staffs to help explain implications of proposed or existing legislation or regulations while seeking to ethically represent his or her client's interests.

Teaching

If your goal is to become a public relations educator, you will have to consider pursuing a Ph.D.—a doctoral degree in public relations. The *Report* explains that this is a theory-and-research degree program that prepares students for academic positions in universities and for advanced management and applied research positions in public relations departments in large organizations, opinion research companies and other mass communication-oriented organizations.

Students who want to teach public relations should expect to enroll in courses of communication theory, philosophy of science, research methods and statistical and qualitative research tools. The Ph.D. program should offer several specialized seminars in public relations management and its appropriate place in the organizational structure; behavior of publics, public relations roles, law, history and operations and global perspectives on public relations.

Your responsibilities will include not only teaching the theoretical foundations of the profession, but also advising and supervising students as they practice and develop their learned skills.

In addition to academic study, the student interested in a career in public relations education also should have some practical professional experience. Knowledge of so-called "real world" public relations can supplement the body of theoretical knowledge gained from undergraduate and graduate study.

2

"It's important to carefully choose the first job in public relations. However, after developing skills for a while, one often is in a better position to decide what area is preferable. There are advantages of each type of employer. Many think counseling firms with varied clients are the ideal place to begin a career because the professional is likely to get an overview of the field. On the other hand, some prefer nonprofits because staffs often are smaller and the novice practitioner has the opportunity to follow projects from conception to completion and evaluation, making all the steps in between. Others might enjoy corporate jobs, where practitioners on staff usually learn the company to a greater degree than outside consultants. And practitioners with jobs in government agencies historically have been more secure than in other areas, except when working for elected officials whose staffs often lose their jobs when top officials leave office."

Kathleen Fearn-Banks, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
University of Washington
Member, Commission on
Public Relations Education

Graduate Studies

Should I Get an Advanced Degree?

It depends on what your career objectives are, but the *Report* says that the purpose of a master's degree is to enable students to acquire advanced skills and knowledge in research, management, problem-solving and issues as well as to obtain management-level expertise. This degree should also give you a broader scope and comprehensive understanding of the communications field. A bachelor's degree provides you with the basic knowledge and preparation to enter the public relations profession, but the master's degree will take you to a higher level of learning and decision-making as well as creativity and planning development.

You can earn a master's degree in any area of concentration in which you would like to work after you graduate, for example: marketing, international business and politics. Some master's degree programs are focusing on integrated marketing communication, yet retaining the concept of public relations' role as a management function. The master's degree prepares individuals for public relations management, leadership and career development and enables them to make contributions to the profession and to society on a global context. An advanced degree, in addition to providing you with a higher level of education, prepares you to be a higher-level professional and gives you the opportunity to earn a higher salary.

Graduate students should gain advanced knowledge and understanding of the body of knowledge in public relations, including theory, research, communication processes, planning, production and advanced management abilities.

What Should the Curriculum Look Like?

According to the *Commission Report*, the basic curriculum of the master's degree in public relations should be a program of study requiring between 30 to 36 credit hours of graduate coursework, including areas such as:

1. Communication Theory

At this level of study, the graduate public relations student should already have an understanding of the history and basic tenets of the field. This coursework area should now familiarize students with the leading theories of public relations scholarship, including social science, rhetorical and communication theories such as models of public relations and theories of public relationships and public relations history and issues, such as feminization of the field.

2. Communication Law

In this segment of the public relations graduate program, you will learn about the regulatory, constitutional and statutory laws of public relations as well as the risks of free expression. You will also learn about the emergence of new media, their effect on communication law and vice-versa.

3. Research Methods

You will learn to apply social-science research methodologies to the planning, implementation and evaluation process in public relations. Understanding of experimental design, sampling, use of standard statistical packages, report writing and research ethics should be taught in this course.

4. Communication Management

The Commission *Report* recommends that this area of study should teach strategic management principles, including planning, staffing, counseling and budgeting; concepts of organizational effectiveness—such as strategy, size and technology, culture and globalization—along with crisis management, negotiation and conflict resolution.

5. Communication Processes

Here you will learn and apply practices of organizational communication as well as interpersonal, small group, mass persuasion and rhetorical communication.

6. Programming and Production

This area should include advanced programming and production techniques related to new technology, the Internet and telecommunications, message preparation and visual communication principles. The *Report* suggests students should use research-and-evaluation models in this “applied side” of public relations.

7. Management Sciences

Learning to apply accounting, finance, marketing and integrated marketing/advertising communications to both for-profit and nonprofit organizations will be the primary focus of the courses at the graduate level.

8. Behavioral Sciences

The study of behavioral sciences will prepare you to understand social psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology and political science, group behavior, global trends, global codes of conduct and organizational culture according to state, local, national and international political systems.



“Graduate education helps you work smarter. You learn research methods that enlarge your professional public relations ‘tool box.’ Exposure to a broader range of literature makes you examine strategies carefully, ask ‘why’ a lot more often and look for evidence that effort equals effects.”

**Dr. Doug Newsom,
APR, Fellow PRSA
Texas Christian University
Member, Commission on
Public Relations Education**

Outlook For Public Relations In The 21st Century

The future is indeed bright for public relations. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that public relations is one of the fastest-growing professional fields in the country, and that growth trend is mirrored in other countries as well. There is, however, one major factor that is of serious concern: having enough trained people to meet the expanding demand for public relations services and counsel. In fact, one expert observer of the field has called this “public relations’ next crisis.”



26 Hyperbole aside, there is no doubt that providing a pool of qualified practitioners will be a severe problem for the future. The public relations education of the next century as envisioned by the *Report*, like public relations itself, is a matter of continuous professional growth and development. The *Report* has looked down the road at what public relations education in the future should be if it is to meet the needs of the profession, as well as business and society, in the new millennium. Understanding the connection between public relations elements of modern society will be vital, as will the necessary skills of writing, analyzing and critical thinking.

Now and in the future, public relations professionals must not only be skilled communicators, but leaders who will help their organizations build and maintain relationships with strategic publics. They will fulfill dual roles of managing communication and counseling top management. Excellent public relations education will provide a good foundation for preparing new professionals for this dual responsibility.

Therefore, it is important that public relations education continues to grow in sophistication throughout the 21st Century. Public relations as an academic discipline should be equal in status to

professionally oriented academic programs in journalism, marketing, advertising, law and medicine. Academic programs at the graduate level may become comparable in length, complexity and intensity to MBA programs. Public relations programs may require greater structural and decision-making autonomy. Public relations education of the future will be truly interdisciplinary, and, with the growth of the field, may no longer only be housed within schools of journalism or communication. In fact, such education may well evolve as an independent entity on university and college campuses just as there are law schools, colleges of business, science and health. According to the *Commission Report*, the emerging ideal school of public relations will be a complex amalgam of the many disciplines it involves.

As a public relations professional, you will encounter and apply the ever-expanding and evolving Internet. You will find it will be crucial to be technologically attuned to the Internet's future uses and its potential to expand our knowledge. The ability to capitalize on this technology as a public relations tool will greatly enhance your career opportunities. According to one notable international public relations practitioner, "the Internet is the most exciting innovation of modern times as well as a potentially lethal weapon. It is imperative that you understand this technology fully because there are no second chances with the Internet." He goes on to caution that "The Internet has no gatekeeper and no editor. Information is available instantly around the globe and there is no one to vouch for its validity."

That is exactly why our generation of public relations students must be extremely prudent in our ethical utilization of the Internet. Companies will expect us to know how to solve their problems using the Internet as a key resource. And, it's important to use that knowledge wisely and for good and ethical cause.

As pioneering public relations counselor Ivy Lee said in the early part of the 20th Century, "Our job is to provide truthful, correct and honest information." The Internet will play an important part in that credo. This is the new technology. This is the future of public relations.

Appendix

Public Relations Student Society of America

The Public Relations Student Society of America has earned the distinction of being the pre-eminent, pre-professional public relations student organization.

With more than 6,500 members in 220 chapters nationwide, PRSSA aims to cultivate a mutually advantageous relationship between students and public relations practitioners. It also aims to foster students' understanding of modern theories and procedure, to instill in them a professional attitude and to encourage them to adhere to the highest ideals of the practice of public relations. To be a member, a student must be enrolled at a college or university where a PRSSA chapter has been established.

PRSSA serves as a springboard to future professional development. As a pre-professional society, PRSSA enjoys close ties with PRSA. After graduation, PRSSA students can join PRSA as an associate member at a greatly reduced rate.

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PRSSA Mission Statement

1. To serve its members by enhancing their knowledge of public relations and providing access to professional development opportunities;
2. To serve the public relations profession by helping to develop highly qualified, well-prepared professionals.

A Student's Guide...

What Are The Benefits Of Membership?

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Scholarships | PRSSA Web Site |
| Competitions | Case Study Competition |
| Networking | Internship Programs |
| Leadership Training | Informational Handbooks |
| Leadership Caucuses | Writing for PRSSA <i>Forum</i> |
| Internships/Job Listings | Holding National or Local Office |
| National Conference | Host/Plan a Regional Activity |
| Regional Activities | <i>Tactics</i> — PRSA's Monthly Publication |
| Student-Run Firms | PRSA Associate Member Opportunities |
| Host a National Conference | |
| Support of Local PRSA Chapter | |
| Chapter Development | |

Check it out! PRSSA's web address is **<http://www.prssa.org>**

"PRSSA is the port of entry for any student interested in a successful public relations career. From exciting local and national events to networking opportunities on the national and international stage, PRSSA offers a logical complement to PR education — professional development and growth through real-world leadership, experience and interaction. I began my PRSSA experience as a college sophomore by volunteering for the registration desk at a local PRSSA event. The next year, I led my school's efforts to host the 1997 PRSSA National Conference in Nashville. And in 1998 I served as PRSSA National President. Without question, the relationships I built during three years of national involvement will last a lifetime. And the professional skills carried forward from student leadership have dramatically accelerated the rate at which I have advanced in the field."

Kent Landers
Manager,
Corporate Communications
Atlantic Southeast Airlines

“One of the hallmarks of a profession is a professional culture that is shaped, shared and reinforced through association with colleagues. Participating in—not just belonging to—a professional organization such as PRSSA or PRSA distinguishes practitioners of the profession of public relations from those who merely engage in public relations-like activities. While PRSSA didn’t exist when I was a student, I’ve been a member of PRSA almost from the day I started my first public relations job. While the professional development and acculturation opportunities PRSA presents are substantial, it is the networking that keeps me coming back.”

**Dr. Judy Van Slyke Turk,
APR, Fellow, PRSA
Zayed University, Dubai,
United Arab Emirates
Member, Commission on
Public Relations Education**

Public Relations Society of America

With more than 20,000 members, 114 chapters, 10 geographic districts and 15 professional interest groups, PRSA is the world's largest individual-member professional society devoted to the practice of public relations. Its professional interest groups, known as sections and academies, provide specialized services to members representing: Associations, Corporate, Counselors, Educational and Cultural Organizations, Educators, Financial Services, Health, Investor Relations, Professional Services, Public Affairs and Government, Social Services, Technology, Travel and Tourism and Utilities.

PRSA's major service to its members is its integrated professional development program. Guidebooks, conferences, seminars, publications, audio-visual media and other materials aid members at every career level in maintaining existing professional skills and acquiring new ones.

PRSA also has developed a set of professional norms known as the Public Relations Society of America Code of Professional Standards for the Practice Public Relations. This code is designed for the PRSA to "promote and maintain high standards of public service and ethical conduct among its members." It is reviewed periodically to strengthen the guidelines and respond to changes in society.

The PRSA Professional Practice Center, located at the PRSA National Office in New York, contains a large collection of public relations texts, articles, guidebooks, reference data and other materials, with information available on over 1,000 subjects. Each year, the Center answers more than 20,000 requests for information and receives more than 1,000 visitors.

For more information, contact:

Public Relations Society of America

33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003-2376,

Telephone (212) 995-2230, fax (212) 995-0757

<http://www.prsa.org>

The Certification (CEPR) Program of PRSA

Introduction

Acting on a recommendation by the Educational Affairs Committee, the PRSA Board of Directors established the Certification Program to provide optional review and certification for undergraduate public relations programs of study.

Certification/Recertification by PRSA is designated for public relations programs that:

1. Are located in academic units that are connected to PRSA through a Public Relations Student Society of America charter and/or PRSA membership by at least one of its faculty or staff in the unit housing the public relations program;
2. Have been recommended to the PRSA Board of Directors after a study and on-site review conducted under the auspices of the Educational Affairs Committee;
3. Have been designated as Certified by the PRSA Board of Directors. (The requested Certification review at a school chartered by PRSA for a PRSSA Chapter will have no bearing on PRSSA Charter Requirements, which are specified in PRSA and PRSSA bylaws.)

Background

A public relations program located in school units associated with journalism and mass communication is reviewed, along with other areas in the units during an examination by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). This is an organization authorized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the U.S. Department of Education. (PRSA is a member of ACEJMC.) However, no such official authority exists for the growing number of public relations programs in other units, e.g. schools or departments of Speech Communication, Arts and Sciences, and Business.

Initially, PRSA established the Certification Program in response to educators who are members of PRSA and whose programs are not associated with journalism/mass communication units. Subsequently, however, members whose programs are housed in units of journalism/mass communications also have requested the specialized review offered by the Certification Program designed solely for public relations studies.

The Certification Program does not presume any governmental authority for its examination of public relations programs. Rather, it seeks to be responsible and responsive to those schools with which PRSA has established a connection and that wish a thorough, objective review of their public relations programs by the foremost professional organization of public relations practitioners and educators in the United States.

The Public Relations Society Of America CEPR Program

“Public relations has come of age, and with that has come a critical need for broadly-based education that is relevant and connected to the practice.”

A Port of Entry: The Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education

To help ensure that this need is met, the Public Relations Society of America for more than a decade, has administered its Certified in Education for Public Relations Program (CEPR). The CEPR program provides objective review and certification of undergraduate public relations programs.

The CEPR credential has been granted to the following schools:

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ball State University | Certified- | October 1993 |
| Brigham Young University | Certified- Recertified- | April 1990 November 1999 |
| Defense Information School | Certified- | November 1990 |
| Eastern Kentucky University | Certified- Recertified- | February 1991 April 2000 |
| Florida State University | Certified- | May 1991 |
| Indiana State University | Certified- | May 1991 |
| University of Maryland | Certified- | April 2000 |
| Seneca College | Certified- | August 1999 |

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