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The Commission on Public Relations Education 2017 Report on Undergraduate Education

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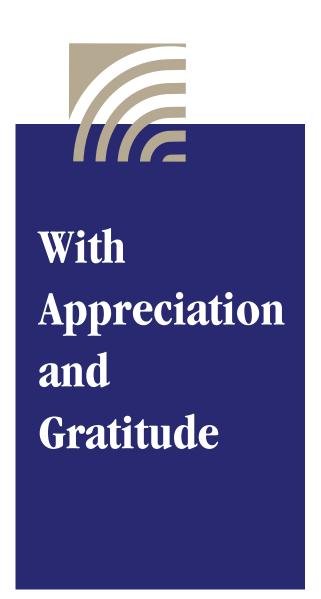
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COMMISSION ON PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

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With Appreciation and Gratitude

Investments come in many shapes and sizes, and The Commission has been fortunate to have individuals and organizations support us with their time, talent, in-kind services, and financial contributions. To all, we extend our heartfelt thanks on behalf of the public relations students, educators and practitioners who will benefit from this report and the work of The Commission.

Special thanks to those who invested financially in our research and this report:

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We had a village of volunteers to bring this report to life. The chapter teams are listed at the beginning of each chapter, and kudos to each person involved. Special acknowledgement is made to:
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- **Marcia DiStasio,** immediate past co-chair of the Commission, who took over leadership of the report in 2016, developing the team of authors concept for this report, recruiting authors, produced the foundational Omnibus Survey and the structuring of the chapters;

- **Elizabeth Toth** and **Kathleen Lewton,** who led the editing, creation of additional content and production of the report, development of the Commission's new logo and website, and as 2018 co-chairs of the Commission will lead the action phase to bring the report's recommendations to reality.

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  o And our personal thanks to Jeneen Garcia. Without you . . . . no CPRE. no PRSSA. no CEPR. You are the personal foundation for the industry's support of public relations education.

Finally, to all educators, practitioners and practitioners-to-be:

The work we do matters. Public relations practitioners make a difference daily, and our work makes the world a better place. Stay the course, with ethics as our true north, and be proud of what you do!

THE PLANK CENTER
FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Dedicated to the memory of

Betsy Ann Plank
Champion of Public Relations Students

A message of gratitude and love to **Betsy Ann Plank,** Past President of PRSA, and the professional who single-handedly lived the commitment to make public relations students a cornerstone of the Society, the Commission and every organization she touched. A driving force behind the Commission in its early years and co-author of its second report, the founder of Champions for PRSSA, and a tireless force for students, she never missed an opportunity to remind all of us that students are not only the next generation of our colleagues, but also our future, and our hope.

The Commission on Public Relations Education: Marking 45 Years of Service to the Profession and Education

The Commission on Public Relations Education is the authoritative voice on public relations education. Since its founding in 1973 by the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism, joined by co-sponsor the Public Relations Society of America, the Commission has provided recommendations on public relations education for universities and professional associations across the globe. These recommendations have been adopted and adapted to positively impact undergraduate and graduate public relations education. The Commission's work also produces essential data and recommendations informed by research and honed by experienced practitioners and educators, and used by educators, educational administrators, students, practitioners and industry leaders. The Commission also strives to offer a forum for advancing public relations education with a global perspective.

The Commission's recommendations throughout the years have also included criteria for creation of Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapters, standards for PRSA Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) and the work of practitioner and educator associations around the globe.

The Commission seeks to establish benchmarks for teaching public relations that are current, research-based, sensitive to culture and language, and applicable to preparing public relations students for careers in practice, research, teaching, or a combination of all three. The Commission chooses projects from the full spectrum of activity in the education field including researching and identifying factors that help students understand the expectations for a career in public relations.

A Brief Historical Overview
The Commission's raison d'etre has its roots in a paper commenting on the "unsatisfactory and disparate state of public relations education in the U.S.," delivered to the PR Division of AEJ (now AEJMC) at its 1973 meeting by industry legends J. Carroll Bateman and Professor Scott M. Cutlip. Their paper, referenced in the 1975 report, "A Design for Public Relations Education," available on the CPRE website, is well worth a read, as is the 1973 report.

The concerns in 1973 will sound, ironically, too familiar to us today: the lack of public relations professionals in the executive suites, practitioners not trained in public relations but rather "retreads" from other fields, multiple names for the profession, a shortage of public relations degree programs, and "There is a pretty general complaint from employers that the students they hire 'can't write.'"

The first report covered topics still important today – what subjects to teach, qualifications of teachers and teaching methods, public relations research, transitioning from campus to profession, and "liaison between public relations practice and the campus."

The report was reprinted in 1981, and the Commission's tradition of developing and disseminating research-based reports was solidified.

In 1987 another report was created, "The Design for Undergraduate Public Relations," focused, as its name infers, on undergraduate education. While the first report focused on identifying courses that should be taught, and the 1987 report delved into content for those courses.

The Commission itself had also changed – membership had grown to 26 members, and included representatives from additional organizations in addition to founders AEJMC and PRSA.

Fast forwarding since 1987
In 1999, the Commission published "A Port of Entry." This report made recommendations for undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education. In regard to undergraduate education coursework, the 1999 report identified a list of courses which were identified as "ideal:"

- Introduction to Public Relations
- Case Studies in Public Relations
- 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)

The authors also noted that this was a long list and that some of the courses could be combined. As the

recommendations were put into practice, it became customary to include four courses (intro to public relations, research, writing, and internships), plus an additional course or combination of the other courses (law and ethics, planning and management, case studies or campaigns).

In 2006, the Commission published "The Professional Bond." This report presented recommendations for undergraduate and graduate education. The goal of this report was to "demonstrate, facilitate and encourage the kind of linking of public relations education and practice that is the hallmark of any profession." Specified in this report was what has become known as "the five-course standard":

- 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 (a standard that has evolved in actual practice to focus primarily on case studies and campaigns).

In 2010, the Commission published two reports:

- "A First Look: Analysis of Global Public Relations Education", which presented the findings of research conducted in 2010 on how public relations is being taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels in countries around the world.

- "Philanthropy for Public Relations Education", which presented the findings of research conducted in 2010, extending the original research of the Commission of Public Relations' 2006 study that produced a first ever "Sampling of Major Gifts to Public Relations Education."

And in 2012, "Standards for a Master's Degree in Public Relations: Educating for Complexity" was published. From research conducted in 2011, this report provides recommendations for graduate-level public relations education that will benefit those going into academia and the practitioner world.

The Commission Today

Today the Commission remains "the authoritative voice" on behalf of public relations education, with a board representing 18 different organizations and groups, and between 50 and 60 board members on an annual basis. In 2018, following the publication of this report "Fast Forward: Foundations and Future State. Educators and Practitioners," the Commission will be pursuing an aggressive effort to develop action plans to unite educators and practitioners in addressing six to ten of the major recommendations of the report. We are committed to going beyond disseminating the recommendations and encouraging that they be adopted in education and industry, and will be working with all member organizations to identify solutions and tools for use by educators and those who employ entry-level public relations practitioners, to make sure the recommendations become reality.

Today the Commission remains "the authoritative voice" on behalf of public relations education, with a board representing 18 different organizations and groups, and between 50 and 60 board members on an annual basis.

COMMISSION ON
PUBLIC RELATIONS
EDUCATION

FAST FORWARD: The 2017 Report on Undergraduate Public Relations Education

OVERVIEW/
EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

The Commission on Public Relations 2017 Report on Undergraduate Education

Out of Many Ideas, Came a Common Vision

When 16 teams of Commission on Public Relations Education members came together in 2017 to write this report, their charge sounded straightforward. Each team was to drill down on one specific topic, work independently of other teams, and use multiple research methods and their own experiences as educators and practitioners, to tell the story of the current state, challenges, opportunities, barriers and most importantly, recommendations for actions that will help enhance, improve and take public relations education to a new level of excellence.

Each team, each member, brought commitment, knowledge and personal passion to the task. The end results of their work, when aggregated to yield this newest report from the Commission, are as distinctive as the subjects they covered, and yet despite the differences in topics, authors and methodologies, there is a common vision of several key themes that re-occur throughout the report. Those themes inspired the naming of this report, and provide a pathway to guide those who share a commitment to public relations education.

Fast Forward

Now, in 2017, this is such a generic term. And yet, it works as a title. It so perfectly describes the current world through which public relations practitioners, educators and students are traversing, and it captures the sense of change and a consistent need for more change that is discussed throughout the chapters of this report.

Public relations education mirrors the public relations industry, and the industry is in a time of incredibly intense movement and change. That theme played out in many of the report's chapters – and at the Commission on Public Relations Education Industry-Educator Summit in 2015, when keynoter Rob Flaherty of Ketchum observed that "Half of what we do now didn't exist ten years ago," and other participants responded that in ten more years, it will all have changed again. Core skills still apply but the context is different and continuously adapting. Are the foundations of what students have been taught and practitioners have valued for decades still essential?

And can we all work together, industry and academy, to preserve our integrity as a profession while we are on fast forward, working in a profession that must mirror the world that changes at an ultra-fast forward pace?

There is a universal acceptance among practitioners and educators that the ability to move, be nimble and adaptable, is critical.

And there is consensus on the critical questions. How do we manage? How do we not only keep up, but also look ahead and prepare for that next powerful wave of public opinion like #NeverAgain or the next hot technological advance that will make tweets look tired?

Again, across 16 chapters that ranged from curriculum to globalization, ethics to technology, common themes emerged, describing a pathway for our profession.

Focus: Foundations + Future State. Practitioners + Educators.

These two, paired themes reflect the report findings and recommendations.

As we continuously adapt to the future, there is strong, deep belief that we have to build on the foundations of our profession, including theory, research and most significantly, ethics, while simultaneously looking at the future state of public relations and what students need to know and be able to do so that they can both succeed in and contribute to the development of our profession.

Wrote one respondent to a survey following the 2015 CPRE Industry-Educator Summit (see Chapter 1), "The foundations are our true north. *If we remain committed to and build on them as we move forward,* we will arrive at whatever future state will be needed, grounded in the key tenets of what we believe is the art and science of public relations."

If that's the "what," then what's the "how" of achieving this?

Partnering. The never-more-important-than-now need is for educators and practitioners to work together in a unified way, to translate the industry's needs into the learning objectives for educators and students. And then to work together to ensure that curricula, experiential learning and off-campus activities, all supported by practitioners, prepare our students for the work that they will be doing, and give them the ability to adapt as the world and the profession continue to change over the decades.

Educators and practitioners, the academy and the industry, must work together. Silos or side-by-side are simply too slow, too cumbersome for a fast forward world.

The Journey: How This Report Came to Life

The Commission's first look at undergraduate education was in 1975, with "A Design for Public Relations Education," the first report of the Commission on Public Relations which had been created in 1973 by the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism, joined by co-sponsor Public Relations Society of America. That report was reprinted in 1981, and in 1999, CPRE produced "A Port of Entry," which included recommendations for undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education. In 2006, CPRE published "The Professional Bond," which focused on undergraduate and graduate education, and was intended to be an "interim" report until another major report was done. As the authors discovered during five waves of research, there was such a wealth of opinions, ideas and topics that the report became as complete a product as "Port of Entry."

In 2012, CPRE undertook a focused look at graduate education, specifically master's degree standards, in the report "Educating for Complexity," and immediately began plans for the obvious next step: a report, focused solely on undergraduate education. The topic was obvious not only because it had been six years since the topic had been studied, but also because undergraduate public relations programs were increasing exponentially, with more and more students majoring in public relations at the undergraduate level.

In 2013, six years after "The Bond" was completed, CPRE leaders began discussing the next report focusing on undergraduate education, and the work on "Fast Forward" began. Three years of quantitative and qualitative research, from focus groups to an omnibus survey survey, provided a solid foundation of information, data, and insights for the report authors.

Fast Forward: What Does the 2017 Report Tell Us?

Each chapter in this report has significant key findings and a set of recommendations for industry and education. The editors think every chapter is Required Reading, and in this overview, we will highlight key insights as a guide to what is found in the chapters that follow. These are not in strict order of importance; it is another part of our challenge that there are multiple and equally compelling challenges that all need to be addressed, now and quickly.

Writing... Still the core skill

Writing. Still the core skill. Across multiple platforms that multiply seemingly daily. Educators and practitioners agree that writing is essential, and agree, to differing degrees, that students are not showing up at their first job with strong writing skills. Flagged as a major concern and a CPRE recommendation for yet more attention. Teach and evaluate writing in every public relations class is a recommended strategy.

Ethics. Ethics. Ethics. This was not a topic of attention only from the ethics chapter team – it was a subject that emerged via research with educators and practitioners, and the curriculum chapter team and others. Of course the external environment had an impact on the chapter authors and the people working on all chapters of this report – fake news and BOT-driven content and Bell-Pottinger . . . we know the litany too well. But the role of ethics as a tenet of our profession was going to be a core of this report even before we first heard the term "alternative facts." What changed as the world changed was the complexity and intensity of what it means to be an ethical profession. The ethics chapter digs deep, and also opens with an inspiring overview of how the profession has responded and will continue to respond to ensure that those who say they practice public relations are doing it in an ethical way. As PRSA 2018 Chairman Tony D'Angelo put it in a letter sent to the editor of the *New York Times,* the purveyors of fake news and alternative facts are #notourPR."

Ethics... Ethics...Ethics

Research remains a bedrock

Research remains a bedrock of professional public relations (as different from people who "love people," like to do events and create a website claiming to be "PR experts"). A quote from Mark Weiner in the research chapter is an inspiration to all of us remember that research is our bedrock process – for planning, insights, strategy, and measurement. The terminology – data, analytics, data analytics, big data, etc.— is less important than committing to make research an essential part of our work.

Technology is a triple threat challenge

Technology is a triple threat challenge. Ten years ago, it was a topic that was a must mention. Now it is not only a rapidly growing subject for study, it is also a core part of *how* educators teach and practitioners work, and it is a strategy for effective public relations. One educator commented, "I have to teach it and be able to DO it myself." The technology chapter is a must-read especially for those of us who still use a paper calendar (and yes, some of us still do).

Online learning is about more than just the tech to make it happen

Online learning is about more than just the tech to make it happen, but about a need for looking at every facet of teaching and learning to determine what has to be adapted to make the online process produce the same level of learning that can occur in a classroom. This is particularly important at a time when students find online the best educational option for them, and yet 60 per cent of practitioners surveyed say they prefer students from programs taught in a traditional classroom and want any courses taken online to be identified as such. Yet another major challenge for both educators and practitioners.

Learning objectives – what students must know and be able to do when they graduate – should map to what employers expect from their new hires. The research findings on "what employers want" should be required reading for educators and practitioners (who may find some surprises that can affect their own career development!). In the terms of the KSA trio, when it comes to entry-level hires, employers value knowledge, but care most about skills.

- Writing tops the needed skills list, and ethics tops the knowledge list.

- The most desired abilities are creative thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking.

- Employers also identify traits they'd like to see, and even though traits aren't things that can be taught in a classroom, authors of the CPRE Summit chapter note that educators should nevertheless make sure that students are aware of what employers value. (The college years can be a good time for some trait self-modification).

A key observation that is consistent across all KSAs and other "what hirers want" findings is that there are gaps, often significant, between what employers want, what they think new hires have – and educators often tend to rate students higher than do practitioners. **This chapter has a mass of data that is important –** put on reading glasses and look at the charts. One caveat: as was discovered during discussion at the CPRE Summit (Chapter 1), and via the small focused survey of hirers conducted after the Summit, hirers have strongly held opinions that can differ significantly based on a variety of variables (agency global vs. agency small, corporation vs. small company, availability of in-house training resources, etc.). **Clearly, one size does not come close to fitting all.**

Learning objectives reflect employer needs

And this all wraps into one of CPRE's primary roles: curriculum

And this all wraps into one of CPRE's primary roles: helping educators define a curriculum that will best prepare students for their entry into the profession. The team who tackled this significant task looked at data from the 2016 Omnibus Survey including direct responses to "what courses should be taught" (a list long enough that students would spend four years taking nothing except public relations and tightly related courses). And they reviewed a myriad of feedback on "what else" – what content should be included in courses and what other topics are of increasing relevance – that students must be exposed to even if it is through courses taught in other departments. Their thoughtful evaluation found that the current five-course minimum recommended by CPRE has stood the test of time, and that it is also time for a change: the addition of a sixth course focused specifically on the top-rated knowledge area and one of the two biggest challenges facing the profession: ethics. Their findings and rationale are important reading for all.

Theory is also foundational

Theory is also foundational – and not as static as some imagine. Theory can get a bad rap because it sounds like all the stuff that never changes. In fact, public relations and public relations education, with our core commitment to research, are a master class in continually observing, questioning and adapting the theoretical drivers of what we do in practice. The world, the profession and education never stand still; our theory is in a similar state of adaptation.

The new model for faculty is evolving

The new model for faculty credentials is . . . still evolving. In the last CPRE report, the state of thinking in education was that most faculty had doctoral degrees, and that practitioners who wanted to be or were already involved in teaching, even with years of on-the-job experience, should seek to earn a Ph.D. The faculty credentials chapter in this report describes an emerging hybrid approach, a faculty model that includes traditionally prepared educators with terminal degrees, and the emerging category of "professor of practice" (full time faculty, some have graduate degrees, all have professional experience) and adjunct faculty (similar credentials to professors of practice, but part-time positions with less involvement in scholarship or service). The key concept is that all faculty must be prepared to teach effectively AND to have experience or at least be exposed to the practice of public relations.

The academic structure remains inconsistent

The academic structure and governance chapter asks the question: where does public relations fit in today's colleges and universities? And the answer is: you name it. Literally. The chapter details this in depth, with a myriad of examples demonstrating that there is a consistent lack of consistency in terms of public relations education, from titles to program status to university support to . . . just about everything. The impact of this is clear; what it will take to recognize significant change is not clear. This is a key area that CPRE recommends needs further study before recommending a huge effort to push universities to change. Trending: university centers focusing exclusively on public relations; unclear, the long-term impact that such centers can have.

Accreditation and certification are desirable but not necessarily rewarded as would be expected. One challenge is that there is no way to identify all of the schools with public relations/tracks. Only a small minority of schools have departments of public relations that are recognized specifically for public relations by one of the two existing programs. Those two programs are quite different. ACEJMC, the larger, more well-known accreditation program, doesn't accredit public relations programs individually, but rather reviews them along with other related fields (journalism, mass communications, etc.) that are part of a larger program. CEPR, the certification program that focuses exclusively on public relations, is smaller, less widely known, and limited because it is a volunteer-run effort. Industry support would be welcomed and may become essential, but faculty, administrators and even students need to be convinced about the value of formal recognition.

CEPR Certification in Education for Public Relations

Accreditation and certification are desirable

Outside-the-classroom offers experiential learning

Outside-the-classroom experiential learning and pre-professional activities are valued by hirers and students. Internships are on the CEPR list of five required courses – but only half of 2016 Omnibus Survey educator respondents indicated that their program requires internships. The internship chapter details challenges to maintaining high standards for internships and finding opportunities for students, particularly with pay. If employers want to hire new grads who have had internships, then industry support is needed to provide more opportunities. Hirers also value student involvement in student-run media and public relations agencies, campus public relations organizations, and general campus activities. But educators report that the activities the students are involved in are in reverse order in terms of what the practitioners prefer, so additional guidance to students, using the CPRE data, can help students evaluate their decisions about where to spend their time and talents.
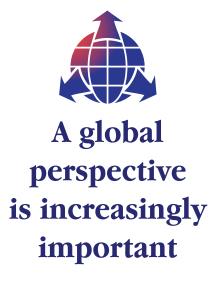
Diversity is a major concern

Diversity is a major concern at all levels of the industry and the academy. No surprises there, but the need to address this challenge at every single opportunity is ever more intense. Chapter authors note that it starts well before minority students enter the college classroom, with special attention to recruitment and "onboarding" and student support throughout their campus years.

Research studies cited show that there are significant challenges to retention of minority practitioners at the entry-level, which is a problem that must be addressed by industry but also by educators, who need to help students prepare for what they may encounter on the job. One key concern: if minority students have problems on their first job, they may not only leave public relations, but may also tell their friends on campus. Neither situation helps the industry address one of the most significant and difficult challenges we face.

The most profound recommendation from chapter authors: focusing on the "business case" for diversity is no longer enough, and far too limiting. **The case for diversity is that it is simply the right thing to do.**

A global perspective is increasingly important

A global perspective is increasingly important for our profession and it should begin during the undergraduate years. It's a given that businesses and organizations and issues are global today. Which means public relations practitioners have to go global, beginning with the simplest of steps: understanding that public relations practice varies with borders and languages, around the world. Having a global perspective isn't an elective anymore; it is essential. The fact that there are career opportunities worldwide should be a way to capture student attention.

The Journey Must Continue, and It Must Be a Joint Effort.
Educators + Practitioners

If there was a single theme that was sounded throughout this report, it is the essential need for industry and academy, practitioners and educators, to work closely together. Not just at a Summit. Not just when this Report is released.

Continuously. Consistently. As a critical step in advancing our profession, and preparing the practitioners of tomorrow, and serving the organizations that we work for and the clients we serve. And above all, as an integral part of ensuring that public relations is seem as a critical function, essential to making the world a better place.

In chapter after chapter, the need for industry support of education, and for dialogue among practitioners and educators, was articulated. Advisory boards. Internships. Philanthropic support. Speaking in classes. The list is endless. And practitioners need educators to translate the skills and knowledge they need in entry-level staff into curriculum and experiential learning in an even more effective way so that when the new grads arrive for their first day at work, they can get busy helping their employers deliver what their companies, clients, and organizations need and expect.

Of all the recommendations in this report – which you will find embedded in each chapter, with the major recommendations detailed on the following pages – the one which CPRE is most committed to is dialogue. We will do all that we can, as the organization that was founded to link educators and practitioners, to ensure that dialogue happens and becomes a commitment for public relations employers and educators.

We invite your support, your feedback, your ideas, your commitment and your participation. Never before has there been such a need for effective public relations, and never before has our profession been under more scrutiny and facing more challenges.

Remember . . . . . the work we do matters. And the education and preparation of those who represent our future is as critical as anything that we do.

We will meet the challenges. Together.

An important note about reading The 2016 Report: While we hope that the full report will be read in its entirety, it was created so that each chapter serves as a stand-alone resource on a specific topic. Each chapter was written by a team of three to five members and a chapter chair, practitioners and educators who are representatives from the member associations or members-at-large. All were selected due to their expertise and interest in the chapter subject; they functioned as subject matter experts. While there is a basic structure for the Report's chapters, teams were free to do whatever they felt enhanced the content and readability of their chapter. So this report looks and reads differently than those of the past. Readers may notice diversity of style and terminology from chapter to chapter. There is also overlap of some themes throughout multiple chapters, indicative of the importance of that topic to the public relations profession.

We hope that you will read the major recommendations that begin on the following page. We hope that you will read the chapters of most interest to you. And then we hope that you will read this entire, lengthy report. There's not a chapter that's unimportant to the work we do.

Major Recommendations

Commission on Public Relations Education
2017 Report on Undergraduate Education

1. The Commission continues to endorse the five-course minimum first recommended in 2006 ("The Professional Bond") and recommends the addition of a sixth course in ethics.

The recommended six minimum courses are:

- Introduction To or Principles of Public Relations
- Research Methods
- Writing
- Campaigns and Case Studies
- Supervised Work Experience or Internships
- Ethics – (more essential than ever in our current age of disinformation, alternative facts and "fake news")

In addition, whether part of public relations coursework (the ideal) or obtained outside of a student's major curriculum, the Commission recommends that students have at least minimal exposure to the following areas that both educators and practitioners consider essential to effective public relations education. The **five additional recommended areas of study** are:

- Business Literacy
- Content Creation
- Data Analytics
- Digital Technology
- Measurement and Evaluation

Details on the recommended courses and areas of study are included in Chapter 4 of this Report.

2. Other Related Recommendations:

a. Public relations majors must have a liberal arts education. A liberal arts education is the foundation for a future practitioners' knowledge and the values learned from that exposure are important in professional development and practice throughout their careers.

b. Writing must be a key part of every course. Writing is the core skill identified by survey respondents, and cannot be seen as an isolated ability, unrelated to other courses.

c. We must recognize that theory is not only important, but also will always be a work in progress as the practice of public relations evolves continuously.

d. Internships must be paid and there should be specific pre-requisite courses taken prior to beginning an internship.

e. Extra-curricular and co-curricular involvement, whether PRSSA, student agencies or volunteer work using public relations skills, should be seen as an integral component for student development, with a particular focus on leadership skills.

3. Dialogue among industry, practitioners and educators must be sustained.

a. At universities, that can be accomplished through advisory boards, alumni involvement, partnerships with campus and community public relations practitioners and chapters of professional associations

b. At the macro level, the Commission must build on the 2015 Industry-Educator Summit to drive continual and consistent dialogue between industry and academic leaders, practitioners from all sectors, and educators, involving major professional and academic associations, including global dialogue on industry-wide topics.

c. Additional research on topics identified in this report as needing further exploration and data should be conducted via single-topic projects to most quickly generate findings that can be shared and put to use by educators and practitioners.

d. Common-interest dialogue should produce outcomes such as course development that is relevant to contemporary client and organizational needs, interests, challenges and opportunities.

4. All faculty must be prepared to teach effectively AND to have experience or at least be exposed to the practice of public relations. There are many different preparations for those who are teaching public relations students: Today, faculties are a blend of individuals with different types of backgrounds and experiences – tenure track, professional practice track and professionals referred to as adjunct faculty.

a. Each have an important role. Tenure track faculty provide scholarship, academic leadership and mentorship to strengthen the currency of public relations degree programs from a scholarly perspective. Professional practice track and adjunct faculty bring the practitioner perspectives and help to update/connect/infuse practice standards into curricula/programs.

b. There is a need for academic and industry associations and industry to support efforts to teach pedagogy for those without that training, and provide opportunities for exposure to public relations practice for faculty who do not have that background.

c. Given that adjunct faculty provide more than half of the instruction students receive at many universities, the Commission should study the development of strategies and tactics to better integrate them into the rigor and requirements of academic education policies and practices, and related activity.

5. Educators and administrators must play a significant role in diversification of the public relations profession.

They must continue to recruit diverse students, along with mentoring and nurturing students from diverse backgrounds and prepare all students to successfully work in a diverse world.

a. Educators have a unique role in making the case for diversity as the right thing to do, in addition to being an important business strategy. We must go beyond "the business case for public relations" in advocating for diversity.

b. Programs must meet and where possible exceed Certification/Accreditation standards for recruiting a diverse faculty.

c. Curricular offerings must reflect diversity in content and in teaching.

d. The Commission should lead/conduct research on best practices in diversity and, in collaboration with practitioners and industry associations, disseminate the findings as a call to action.

6. The Commission must take a leadership role in enhancing the perceived value of a degree in public relations, as well as supporting industry and academic association efforts to enhance the role and value of public relations practitioners to society.

7. The Commission must help educators enhance the presence and value of public relations programs and departments within universities, and work with practitioners and industry associations to support these efforts, which may include:

a. Identifying models for on-campus partnerships with relevant disciplines (MBA, etc.)

b. Conducting research to identify appropriate levels of university funding for items including faculty development, student associations and student-run firms, and how programs support their faculty in creative ways.

c. Working to increase the awareness of the role and value of accreditation and certification of undergraduate public relations programs among employers and prospective students.

d. Developing ways to address the shortage of qualified educators at many programs where enrollment growth has outpaced the size of the faculty.

i. Public relations programs are often the newest in their academic units and as enrollment has grown, and budgets have tightened, some schools have attempted to slot journalism or communications studies faculty into teaching public relations. Schools should be encouraged to hire appropriately trained and prepared faculty for those positions.

8. With the growth of online delivery of public relations education, attention must be paid to specialized pedagogical training for online teaching, program quality control and assessment of this rapidly growing sector of higher education. This is an area that warrants further Commission research.

9. Since technology does not "stand still", educators and practitioners must stay current on emerging communication tools and platforms, messaging capabilities on different channels, how audiences are using media, and data analytics, among other topics, to ensure that students are appropriately prepared before and after taking their first public relations position.

10. There is a need to ensure that students learn that the practice of public relations differs throughout the world, including using case studies from countries other than North America, and that students are aware that there is an abundance of international professional opportunities.

By extension, the impact of future socio/economic/technological issues – such as artificial intelligence, automation, and the further evolution of the workplace – warrant careful study.

Introduction to the Report

There were two major fact-finding and research efforts that provided the framework and much of the content for this report:

1. The Commission on Public Relations Education Industry-Educator Summit, held in New York City in the spring of 2015;

2. The CPRE Omnibus Survey, conducted in the fall of 2016.

These efforts are described in detail in the following two introductory chapters that describe both the process and the findings that were the foundation of this report.

In the Beginning:
The Commission on Public Relations Education Industry-Educator Summit

In The Beginning/Summit Chapter Team

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Overview

The Key Question: What Do Selected Industry Leaders and Selected Hiring Managers Desire in an Entry-Level Public Relations Candidate and How Does That Impact Public Relations Education?

To begin information gathering for this report, research started in 2014 with focus groups of CPRE members. Learnings from these groups helped to shape the Commission on Public Relations Education's 2015 Industry-Educator Summit.

The Summit was a day-long session of discussions among a select group of the industry leaders attended by a select group of CEOs and COOs of major/global agencies, CCOs of major corporations and not-for-profit organizations, senior counselors and practitioners, and educators. This was followed by a survey of a larger and broader group of public relations practitioners across the broad spectrum of the field (medium-sized and small agencies and companies; non-profit and government organizations), each of whom were directly responsible for hiring entry-level staff. The goal was to identify the traits, interpersonal skills, abilities and knowledge areas that these employers believe are needed for a successful entry into public relations careers, so that educators could consider these factors when designing curricula and developing experiential learning for today's students.

We found a striking lack of agreement about the "ideal" preparation for an entry-level position in public relations, a situation that reflects the fact that the profession is changing, the needs of industry employers are changing, and those needs vary greatly from industry sector to industry sector. A director at a small not-for-profit association is looking for different capabilities from a new graduate than is a senior vice president at a global public relations agency.

In this one fairly simple exercise of asking employers across the spectrum about a list of proposed qualifications for an entry-level position in public relations, we found everything from nearly unanimous agreement to great divergence. This poses a significant challenge for educators. The most agreement was found in terms of personal traits and characteristics, which are things not actually "taught" in a classroom. And the least agreement was on the desired skills and knowledge— precisely the things educators are expected to teach. Our key learning: ***The needs of industry are complex and changing, and there's no one-size-fits-all list of knowledge, abilities, and skills that is applicable for every job in every public relations setting.*** **This is today's reality for students aspiring to a career in public relations, those who seek to educate and prepare them, and those who want to hire them.**

Introduction

As an important step in developing this report on public relations education at the undergraduate level, the CPRE reached out to the industry leaders—practitioners and educators, as well as people who hire public relations graduates—to seek their insights and ideas.

This was done as a two-step process, beginning with a small, invitation-only Summit meeting in 2015— involving industry leaders, CEOs and COOs of major/global agencies, CCOs of major corporations and not-for-profit organizations, and other senior counselors, in order to gather their input on the kind of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) they expect to see in entry-level employees. This was followed by a survey of a larger group of public relations practitioners selected across the broad spectrum of the field (including medium-sized and small agencies and companies, plus non-profit and government organizations), each of whom was directly responsible for hiring entry-level staff, to seek their feedback on the Summit KSA list. This survey work began in 2016 and concluded in 2017. Many of the key items from the Summit KSA list were referenced in 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey. The actual items were tested in the follow-up survey of employers.

PHASE ONE: The Summit

In May, 2015, the CPRE convened the Industry-Educator Summit as an initial and significant source of input for the report.

Approximately 50 public relations industry leaders and educators met for a day, hosted by Ketchum at its New York offices, to discuss topics related to undergraduate public relations education, with a heavy focus on how best to prepare students for a career in public relations. Industry leaders included CEOs and COOs of major agencies, CCOs of major corporations and not-for-profit organizations, as well as senior counselors and educators. (The list of participants at the Summit is available on the Commission website www.commpred.org.)

Participants also represented all of the major industry professional and academic associations, including Public Relations Society of America, Arthur Page Society, PR Council, PRSA Foundation, Institute of Public Relations, Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, National Communication Association, Universal Accreditation Board, Association for Education

in Journalism and Mass Communication, Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, European Public Relations Education and Research Association, Chartered Institute of Public Relations, International Communications Consultancy Organization, and the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations.

Much of the day was focused on having employers provide input and ideas on this statement:

We need someone with an undergraduate public relations degree at the entry level who can:

Keynote speakers Rob Flaherty, President and CEO Ketchum, and Elizabeth Toth, Ph.D., Professor and former Chair, Department of Communication, University of Maryland, set the stage for the discussions with overviews of the industry and educator perspectives. (Their complete PPT presentations are available on the Commission website www.commpred.org.)

Among the highlights:

Rob Flaherty:
- Half of everything needed now didn't exist ten years ago.
- People under the age of 35 know more about how people communicate, share information, and form opinions than people over 35.
- Some core skills still apply, but the context is very, very different.
- The changes in the past few years shake the foundation of skills taught for decades.

Elizabeth Toth:
- Industry leaders and educators have much in common and share great enthusiasm. We are not "Mars and Venus," but have shared goals—developing talented people for our profession, as well as shared concerns—the profession is changing so quickly, it's difficult for all of us to keep up.
- Undergraduate public relations students do not focus exclusively on their major, nor does their education occur only in the classroom. Students spend two-thirds of their time being educated in the liberal arts, and in related courses from marketing to organizational development—plus dozens of hours in internships, campus leadership, PRSSA, and more. The result is graduates who are both well-rounded and well-grounded in public relations.

Participants gathered in seven small groups to pursue the question, "What do we need entry-level public relations undergraduates to be prepared to do?" Everyone in the group offered ideas, and then the group ranked the ideas in priority order.

Participants reconvened to share their recommendations and reach a consensus. There were a number of topics discussed by the group as a whole, including:

• The industry is changing rapidly and practitioners are struggling to keep up with evolving strategies and tactical options. This presents a related challenge for educators, who have to adapt content and teaching methods equally quickly.

• There are misperceptions about what's actually being taught in undergraduate programs. Most of the items included on a "don't teach this" list (such as press kits, query letters, how to do a VNR, etc.) are rarely taught, according to the educator participants.

• Despite some public comments to the contrary, the industry participants absolutely believe that writing is an essential core skill, and perhaps even more challenging today because students need to be prepared to write effectively across platforms and for multiple purposes.

• The hierarchy of higher education is complex, and educators can do a better job of helping industry understand the nuances of accreditation, recommended core coursework, certification, etc.

• While universities don't allow programs and majors to be developed quickly, feedback from industry is vital in terms of adapting existing courses, adding resources, and changing methods.

There were significant differences between various industry sectors. It was clear that there's no one-size-fits-all. Some leaders said, "Just teach them the core things and we'll do on-the-job training ourselves," while others said, "We don't have the training resources and need entry-level people ready to dig in on day one."

Similarly, some industry participants said that traditional media relations skills are less important, while others (mostly corporate) said that their company management is still very interested in securing coverage in *The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times,* and similar mainstream outlets. The group generally agreed that students need to know both—how to work across the entire spectrum of traditional, contemporary, and emerging media channels.

Participants also had lively discussions about whether some skills are "traditional" or "new," and eventually decided that some skills are truly "evergreen" in that they don't change but rather are adapted, as part of a continuum that continuously evolves.

After reviewing the very long list of desired characteristics, skills, and knowledge that were proposed by the small groups, the participants took the lead in winnowing down the lists—as well as editing, adding new items, revising, and hammering out agreement—to forge a general consensus on what's core, what's a competency, and what's a personal characteristic. While there was not 100% agreement on every item, after the Summit 83% of participants said they agreed, and 11% strongly agreed, that the following list reflected the thinking of the group.

I. Desirable *personal characteristics* of an entry-level public relations practitioner

A number of personal traits and interpersonal skills required of a public relations practitioner were identified.

Personal Traits:
The participants at the Summit described entry-level public relations practitioners as individuals who have *integrity* and *ethics,* and who are willing to hold themselves *accountable.* Such practitioners are also *sensible* and *resourceful.* Entry-level public relations practitioners should exhibit *intellectual curiosity* (also described as *aggressive curiosity*). Going hand in glove with curiosity is the desire to be *life-long learners.* Finally, entry-level practitioners must have a strong *work ethic* and be *driven.*

Interpersonal Skills:
Participants also required soft skill competencies. Entry-level public relations practitioners must have *self-awareness,* be *adaptable,* and be *assertive.* They also must be *collaborative,* good *listeners,* and *sensitive* to individual and cultural differences.

II. *Skills* needed by an entry-level public relations practitioner

In addition to the personal traits and interpersonal skills required of an entry-level practitioner, the participants identified the following skills as essential:

- *Problem solving*
- *Conducting research and analyzing the data,* going beyond reporting the numbers to identifying the implications.
- *"Connecting the dots"*
  - o Practitioners must be able to make connections among disparate things. They must understand how the world works and connects to their client, organization, or cause.
- *Strategic planning*—being able to set clear goals and measurable outcomes.
- *Advancing organizational goals*
  - o Practitioners must understand how the public relations function fits within the overall organizational goals, and its role in advancing those goals.
- *Project management*—knowing how to not only plan but effectively execute a tactic, a project, or a program.
- *Content creation and storytelling,* with a particular emphasis on storytelling.
  - o As one participant observed, "Developing content is essential, but it's essential that we can wrap it into a compelling story."
- *Writing*
  - o Discussion first focused on social media, then shifted to agreement that writing for traditional channels is equally important and concluded with consensus that writing for all platforms is essential.
- *Clear verbal and graphic communications*

III. *Knowledge* needed by an entry-level public relations practitioner

Participants identified the following knowledge areas as of importance for entry-level public relations practitioners:
- *The role and value of public relations, and the ability to translate this for a client, CEO, or Board.*

- *Measurement*
  - o Understanding what to measure and how to measure.
- *Data analytics and insights*
  - o Understanding analytics, but also understanding what it all means; being able to interpret the data and draw insights from it is crucial.
- *Communication and public relations theories*
  - o Including network and chaos theories, persuasion, and influencing behaviors.
  - o Some said don't bother teaching the history of public relations; others said this knowledge is valuable because it provides context and a solid understanding of how public relations has evolved.
- *Cross-cultural and global communication.*
  - o Having, or developing, a global antenna, a "global sensitivity filter."
- *Understanding influence and how it operates today.*
  - o "Knowing how to change minds, hearts, and behavior."
- *Business processes and planning.*
- *Business acumen*—understanding how business works, to provide the contextual significance of public relations.
- *The newest techniques.*
  - o "New grads should know the skills that are new to the public relations profession, the things older practitioners don't even know yet."

Industry leaders also emphasized the importance of "real world" experience, and educators noted that this kind of experience is an integral part of undergraduate programs today.

As the Summit concluded, a number of participants observed that while the participants were in general agreement, their views represented one slice of the public relations industry, since most were CEOs of large national or global agencies, or CCOs of large corporations.

Summit leaders identified a need to broaden involvement in the discussion of entry-level competencies by reaching out to a more wide-ranging group of practitioners from other sectors, such as not-for-profit, smaller agencies and businesses, government, and counseling.

PHASE TWO: Focused Survey of Public Relations Practitioners Who Hire Entry-Level Positions ("Hirers")

A follow-up study of a larger group of selected public relations employers in a wide range of industries, specialties, and different-sized organizations was conducted to seek their reaction to the traits, interpersonal skills, abilities, and knowledge identified by the Summit participants. A quantitative online Qualtrics survey of 18 questions asked these employers about their opinions on the desirability of specific lists of traits, interpersonal skills, abilities, and knowledge and to give any additional suggestions for these four categories. They answered eight demographic questions and one open-ended question asking for anything else they wished to add to their responses. The research project and survey were approved the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board.

Because no accurate and comprehensive list of public relations employers exists, conducting a probability sample was not feasible. The study authors sought to go beyond typically used lists such as association membership lists by having a number of Summit participants, Commission members and leaders in a variety of sectors use their personal networks to reach individual practitioners who make hiring decisions for entry-level public relations positions. They invited colleagues to participate in the survey, via a standard invitation that explained the purpose of the survey and provided a secured link to the survey that would keep all responses anonymous. The survey was open between February 18, 2017 and April 7, 2017. Of the 114 people who opened the survey, 105 completed it. The limits of a nonprobability sample, and the resulting small sample size qualify the findings of the survey; the responses from participants in this study, and those from Summit attendees, are best characterized as a snapshot of industry leader and employer points of view.

The typical participant in this study was a White/Caucasian (90%) man or women who worked either in an agency or corporate setting, with hiring responsibilities. They were split almost evenly in terms of gender.

The current positions held by the participants were almost equally split between agency/consultancy settings (33%) and corporations (27%). Approximately

12% of the participants held positions in educational institutions. Twelve percent of the participants worked in nonprofit/association settings; and seven percent were independent counselors. The remaining seven percent said that they worked in health care settings; and one person reported being retired.

With one exception, all of the participants had current or recent career experiences in hiring entry-level practitioners. Over 63% were directly responsible for making hiring decisions for persons reporting to them. Almost 20% had had responsibility for hiring entry-level practitioners in the last 10 years. Others were involved in the process of evaluating people who were to be hired for the team and making recommendations to their direct supervisor of a search team; or made hiring decisions with the approval of their direct supervisors for people who reported to them.

Findings
As was to be expected, there was general agreement between the industry leaders who developed the Summit list (referred to as Summit participants) and the practitioners who are involved in hiring decisions for entry-level positions (referred to as hirers). But the level of intensity varied; Summit participants had stronger agreement on some items that hirers only somewhat agreed with.

Snapshot: Personal Traits and Characteristics
The hirers in this sample were generally supportive of all of the traits surveyed (see Table 1). Large majorities (above 85%) strongly agreed that entry-level employees should have integrity, be ethical, be accountable, and have a strong work ethic. About three-quarters strongly agreed on a high degree of responsibility (76%); that they be sensible (75%); and, that they exhibit intellectual curiosity (70%), lower than the top items but frequencies of strong agreement that were still very high.

Of interest: Only half of the hirers in the sample were in strong agreement that entry-level employees be lifelong learners (56%) and be driven (56%).

The hirers had a lot to say, contributing more than 60 ideas on what traits they'd like to see in an entry-level employee. Many mentioned team work (which was

included on a different survey question) and the need for entry-level employees to be strategic/critical thinkers.

They wrote about the ability to see and understand opposing viewpoints, having a healthy skepticism, questioning conventional wisdom, desiring to create clear plans and solve problems, and:

> "Perhaps this is more of a skill than a trait, but I would add: Is able to and habitually does think critically. That is, challenges assumptions and arguments and adduced evidence; asks questions; identifies and understands rhetorical approaches; and is evidenced-based in approaching problems and decisions."

Finally, these hirers also commented that they desired entry-level employees who were humble and took criticism well, and were nimble, adaptable, flexible, resilient, agile, embracing the need for change—able to juggle multiple projects without getting overwhelmed or frustrated.

Snapshot: Interpersonal Skills
This sample of hirers generally agreed with one exception with the list of interpersonal skills desirable in entry-level employees (see Table 2). More than 75% strongly agreed that they desired "good listeners," "collaborative" and adaptable. They strongly agreed that entry-level employees need to be sensitive to cultural differences, be self-aware, and be sensitive to differences among co-workers.

Of interest: only 21% of the hirers strongly agreed with the Summit participants that they desired assertive employees (60% somewhat agreed). Several respondents said that instead of assertive, they preferred people who are "persuasive," as well as proactive and "politically astute."

Snapshot: Abilities
The opinions of hirers diverged more significantly in terms of desired abilities (see Table 3). The highest percentage of the hirers (71%) in the sample strongly agreed on strong verbal communications abilities and 68% strongly agreed on problem-solving skills. In the low 60s and 50% group were hirers in strong agreement

on writing skills (including writing for all platforms and wrapping content into compelling stories). More than 50% of the hirers strongly agreed that they desire entry-level practitioners who were able to "connect the dots" among disparate things and that employees should be able to understand how the world works and connect this with clients, organizations, and causes.

Less than 50% gave strong agreement ratings to being able to plan, execute, and manage a project; to understanding how the public relations function fits within the overall organizational goals and its role in advancing those goals; and developing plans based on strategy with clear goals and measurable outcomes. Lowest "strongly agree" ratings were given to the ability to conduct research, analyze data, and go beyond numbers to identify implications (again, this is at the entry level).

The most common comment was that the abilities on the Summit participant list seemed more appropriate to employees beyond the entry level.

Snapshot: Knowledge
This category was where hirers most significantly diverged from Summit participants. Fewer than half strongly agreed with any of the items. The strongest agreement among the hirers was only 46%, those who strongly agreed that entry-level employees need to understand business processes; are able to use the newest techniques ("the things that older practitioners don't even know yet"); understand influence and how it operates today; know how to change minds, hearts, and behavior (45%); and know the role and value of public relations in a way that translates to a client, CEO, or Board (44%).

At the bottom of the "strongly agree" list for hirers came: understanding of business processes (39%); understanding what to measure and how to measure (36%); and understanding persuasion and social influence theories (30%); understanding communication/public relations theories (29%); having a developed global understanding, a 'global sensitivity filter' (23%); understanding the history of public relations so as to provide context and explain how public relations has evolved (16%); understanding network theory (10%); and understanding chaos theory (only nine percent).

Hirers did offer some of their own ideas: understanding change-management processes, knowing how to build relationships, knowing organizational change management, understanding finance, and appreciating how public relations can have an impact on the business or on client needs.

Hirer comments offer insight into why they diverged from the Summit participants:

*"I've rated some things a little lower not because they aren't important but because **I wouldn't expect any entry-level person** to have for instance, a developed global understanding. **We need to be careful not to create a set of expectations that only the proverbial Purple Squirrel could ever meet.**"*

"Many of these are more likely for someone who has been out a few years rather than entering the profession."

In Conclusion: Representative Insights

"All of the skills, attributes and competencies outlined in this survey are important for someone in the field of PR/communications. However, I think over time, these skills are developed and nurtured. Therefore, I do not anticipate that we will hire a new grad that has all of these characteristics day 1."

*"Some of the people who put this list together operate in a rarefied environment and **expect ENTRY-LEVEL people to not only walk on water, but be able to make it rain and fill the lake.** But, I appreciate the Commission going to this effort."*

"I often think the academics teach the students what THEY think students should know based on what they learned in their Ph.D. programs—while we out here in the WORKING WORLD have very different needs. I am so tired of interviewing kids who can do (and expect to do) whole CAM-PAIGNS—and I need them to first and foremost, organize, WRITE, interact with clients. Sure hope you share the results with FACULTY."

Discussion

One of the Summit participants captured today's reality for students aspiring to a career in public relations, for those who seek to educate and prepare them, and for those who want to hire them:

The needs of industry are complex and there's no one-size-fits-all

In this one fairly simple exercise of asking employers—from industry leaders who run some of the world's largest PR agencies and the PR operations at major global corporations, to a broader group of practitioners in agencies and companies of differing sizes, and those at non-profits, associations, etc.—we found everything from nearly unanimous agreement to great divergence. This poses a significant challenge for educators. The most agreement was found in terms of personal traits or personal characteristics, which are things that are not actually "taught" in a classroom. And the least agreement was on those lists of skills and knowledge—precisely the areas where educators are expected to teach. A look at the tables at the end of this chapter makes the gaps clear.

So these findings must be viewed through two lenses. First, this was a nonprobability survey based on snowball and convenience sampling. The findings can contribute insights, but conclusions cannot be generalized to all public relations hirers. And second, these findings are a snapshot in time, when the profession was in the midst of continuous and far-reaching change. Keynoter Rob Flaherty's observations bear repeating here:

- Half of everything needed now didn't exist ten years ago.

- People under the age of 35 know more about how people communicate, share information, and form opinion than people over the age of 35.

- Some core skills still apply but the context is very, very different.

- **The changes in the past few years shake the foundation of skills taught for decades.**

As the Commission developed this report, especially the more extensive quantitative research, many of us concluded that even as we look at the "newest/next" iteration of education for the profession, since it is a field that changes as quickly as the world we serve, educators and education will increasingly and unceasingly have to be nimble, responsive, continuously scanning the industry, and, most important, being true to the mission of the Commission itself: industry and education, working closely together so that when public relations undergraduates are ready to enter the profession, their knowledge and skills closely match the current needs of employers.

Recommendations

- **To develop flexible and resilient students, educators should focus first on teaching core knowledge and competencies.** Because desired skills and abilities already vary so greatly, and are predicted to continuously change as our profession changes to meet the needs of the clients and organizations we serve, educators more than ever need to focus first on core knowledge and competencies, and on developing students who can be flexible and resilient.

- **Educators need to help students understand the strengths and abilities necessary to pursue a public relations career.** Because personal traits and characteristics appear to be so important to those who hire entry-level staff, undergraduate public relations educators will need to make sure students are aware of the personal strengths that are desired and that students consider whether they seem suited for a career in public relations.

- **Industry leaders and educators must consistently communicate with each other about the evolving skills and abilities needed for entry-level practitioners.** Because of the rapidity of change in the profession, it is essential that industry leaders and educators be in continuous contact about evolving needs for entry-level practitioners. The Commission can play a key role in this communication, as can associations such as PRSA and Arthur Page, and advisory boards and alumni groups that work with individual public relations programs.

- **Educators must make it a priority to teach entry-level communication skills development.** To build an effective undergraduate course of study leading to a career in public relations, educators and practitioners must give priority to developing entry-level communication skills.

"There were significant differences between industry sectors (in terms of entry level qualifications) . . . it was clear that there is no one-size-fits-all."

Trait	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Has integrity	95%	4%	0%	0%	1%
Is an ethical practitioner	90%	7%	3%	0%	1%
Is accountable	90%	9%	0%	0%	1%
Is sensible	75%	21%	3%	0%	1%
Has high degree of responsibility	76%	22%	1%	0%	1%
Exhibits intellectual curiosity	70%	28%	2%	0%	1%
Desires to be a life-long learner	56%	38%	5%	0%	1%
Has strong work ethic	86%	12%	1%	0%	1%
Is driven	56%	38%	3%	2%	1%

Interpersonal Skill	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Self-aware	61%	36%	3%	0%	1%
Adaptable	79%	17%	3%	0%	1%
Assertive	21%	60%	17%	1%	1%
Collaborative	84%	15%	0%	0%	1%
Good listener	87%	12%	0%	0%	1%
Sensitive to differences among co-workers	57%	37%	5%	0%	1%
Sensitive to cultural differences	63%	33%	3%	1%	1%

"Some core skills still apply, but the context is very, very different."

Abilities	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Able to solve problems	68%	29%	2%	0%	1%
Able to conduct research, analyze data and go beyond numbers to identify implications	32%	50%	13%	5%	1%
Able to "connect the dots" among disparate things	56%	33%	8%	3%	1%
Able to understand how the world works and connects this to their clients, organizations or causes	52%	35%	12%	2%	0%
Able to develop plans based on strategy, with clear goals and measurable outcomes	41%	35%	12%	12%	1%
Able to not only plan but also effectively execute and manage an execution of a tactic, a project, or a program	49%	32%	7%	12%	1%
Able to create content and wrap it into a compelling story	59%	34%	2%	4%	1%
Able to write for all platforms (traditional, social media, internal communications, web/on-line)	62%	28%	4%	5%	1%
Has strong verbal communications abilities	71%	27%	1%	0%	1%
Able to advance organizational goals–practitioners must understand how the public relations function fits within the overall organizational goals, and its role in advancing those goals	47%	37%	10%	7%	0%

TABLE 4: Knowledge Desired by Employers Who Hire Entry-Level Public Relations Staff

Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Knows the role and value of public relations in ways that translates to a client, CEO, or Board	44%	34%	14%	7%	1%
Understands what to measure and how to measure	36%	45%	15%	3%	1%
Understands communication/ public relations theories	29%	41%	22%	6%	2%
Able to use the newest techniques, the things that older practitioners don't even know yet	46%	44%	9%	1%	0%
Understands network theory	10%	34%	38%	14%	4%
Understands chaos theory	9%	31%	38%	15%	8%
Understands persuasion and social influence theories	30%	36%	28%	7%	0%
Understands the history of public relations so as to provide context and explain how public relations has evolved	16%	32%	23%	21%	8%
Understands business processes	46%	38%	12%	4%	1%
Understands business planning	39%	39%	16%	6%	1%
Has a developed global understanding, a 'global sensitivity filter'	23%	44%	27%	5%	1%
Understands influence and how it operates today: "Knowing how to change minds, hearts, and behavior"	45%	41%	11%	4%	0%

Introduction:
Development of The Commission on Public Relations Education Report And The 2016 Omnibus Survey

Introduction/Survey Chapter Team

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Overview

This report is important for everyone who believes public relations matters: educators, practitioners, students, business and organization leaders, and university administrators.

The last time the Commission on Public Relations Education conducted a report on undergraduate education was in 2006. This report, *"The Professional Bond,* began with an explanation of the importance of public relations being a profession. It was explained that for an occupation to be seen as a profession it should have:

• 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 (p.11).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)[1] the number of persons employed as public relations specialists (the entry-level position they track) is expected to grow 6% from 2014 to 2024. The BLS view of what public relations specialists do is outmoded ("create and maintain a favorable public image for the organization they represent . . . design media releases to shape public perception of their organization and to increase awareness of its work and goals" (para 1), but given that there are numerous definitions of the field that currently exist, it is probably more important to focus on their guidance in terms of preparation for a career in public relations. To prepare for this position, the BLS lists the requirement of "a bachelor's degree in public relations, journalism, communications, English, or business" (para 4).

It is understandable that the BLS and others would be a bit behind in terms of understanding what public relations practitioners do today and will do in the future. It was noted in the 2006 CPRE Report, and it should be repeated

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[1]https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/public-relations-specialists.htm

again, the changes in public relations since the previous report "are numerous and profound." The growth in society and subsequently in public relations has been astounding and continues.

Tracking that growth and identifying the impact it has on public relations education is a major function of CPRE. The 2016 Report continues a commitment of Commission reports that provide insights for both the academy and industry on the critically important subject of how practitioners and educators can work together to best prepare the next generation of public relations professionals.

In 1999, CPRE published *"A Port of Entry."* This report made recommendations for undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education. In 2006, CPRE published *"The Professional Bond."* This report presented recommendations for undergraduate and graduate education. The goal of this report was to "demonstrate, facilitate and encourage the kind of linking of public relations education and practice that is the hallmark of any profession."

In 2012, CPRE focused exclusively on graduate education at the master's level, with the report "*Standards for a Master's Degree in Public Relations: Educating for Complexity.*"

Since the 2006 report was the last time undergraduate education was broadly addressed, and there have been so many changes in both practice and education, it was clearly time for a deep dive into this topic.

Initial planning began in 2013 under the direction of Jean Valin and Karla Gower, Ph.D.. During 2014, under the leadership of Judith Phair, qualitative research was conducted in the U.S. and at international forums where public relations educators and practitioners gathered. Six focus groups were held involving more than 50 educators and practitioners. In 2015, CPRE sponsored the Industry-Educator Summit on Public Relations Education, as described in Chapter 1. With all of the learnings from these efforts, work began under the leadership of Marcia DiStaso, Ph.D. on planning the 2016 Omnibus Survey and the report which would follow.

The 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey

Planning and Development
After completion of the CPRE Industry-Educator Summit, planning began for the report in earnest. In August 2015, it was decided that unlike in past years, the report would be created by all the members of the Commission grouped in chapter teams.

An important note about the 2016 Report: While we hope that the full report will be read, it was created to have each chapter serve as a stand-alone resource on a specific topic. Each chapter was written by a team of three to five members and a chapter chair. This includes practitioners and educators who are representatives from the member associations or members-at-large. All were selected due to their expertise and interest in the chapter subject; they functioned as subject matter experts. While there is a basic structure for each chapter, teams were free to do whatever they felt enhanced the content and readability of their chapter. So this report looks and reads differently than those of the past. Readers may notice diversity of style and terminology from chapter to chapter.

Each CPRE member organization was asked to select a maximum of two individuals to represent their members for the report. Essentially, these individuals served as liaisons between the Commission and their association relaying the needs and efforts of the other to each.

The list of associations that participated in this report include:

• Arthur W. Page Center
• Arthur W. Page Society
• Association for Journalism and Mass Communication Education (AEJMC) Public Relations Division
• Canadian Public Relations Society
• European Public Relations Education and Research Association
• Global Alliance for Public Relations
• Institute for Public Relations (IPR)
• International Communication Association (ICA) Public Relations Division
• National Black Public Relations Society
• National Communication Association (NCA) Public Relations Division

•Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations
•PR Council
•Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Educators Academy
•Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Educational Affairs Committee
•PRSA Foundation
•Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)
•The Corporate Board/SNCR
•Universal Accreditation Board (UAB)

Discussion of report content led to a final list of chapters included in this report:

• Learning Outcomes
• Undergraduate Curriculum
• Diversity
• Ethics
• Faculty Credentials
• Global Implications
• Governance
• Internships
• Online Education
• Professional and Pre-Professional Organizations
• Professional Certification and Accreditation
• Research
• Technology
• Theory

All chapter teams were tasked with conducting secondary research for their specific chapter topics. Each team identified what research would be necessary to properly identify the "current state" of their topic. Most chairs recommended a survey of educators and practitioners that would update the 2006 Professional Bond survey. So, as was done in 2006, the bulk of this report comes from one large survey. The 2006 survey was used as the starting point for the omnibus survey used in this report. CPRE members worked on the Omnibus Survey (also called the 2016 Survey throughout the report) and it was finalized in October 2016.

Survey Structure

The survey was designed to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. It began with a filter question that asked respondents to identify as educators, practitioners, or not in public relations (or related field).

Based on responses to this question, participants were directed to either an educator or a practitioner survey. If they were not in public relations, they were thanked for their time and the survey was concluded.

• The first section addressed knowledge, skills, and abilities. Educators answered questions about how desired the items are and if their program delivers the KSAs. Practitioners answered how desired they are along with if the KSAs are typically found in new hires.

• The second section for educators and practitioners addressed the public relations curriculum. Specifically, a series of closed-and open-ended questions were asked about the five-course standard recommended in the 2006 report.

• The third section for practitioners explored hiring characteristics and experience. Respondents were asked to rank each characteristic for how desired it is and how often it is found in entry-level new hires.

• The third section for educators and the fourth for practitioners provided a list of 44 different curriculum topics and asked respondents to rank how essential they are on a scale from 1 to 5 (1=least essential, 5=most essential).

• The fourth section for educators and the fifth for practitioners explored online education. Along with a few scalar questions, educators were asked if their program has online courses and what they are.

• The fifth section for educators and the sixth for practitioners pertained to internships. Different questions were provided for each and included scalar and open-ended questions.

• The sixth section for educators and the seventh for practitioners asked each how valuable the same seven benefits are for students to be involved in student PR associations (such as PRSSA and IABC).

- The seventh section for educators asked about the importance of 13 faculty credentials. Respondents also answered if they personally held the qualifications. The corresponding section for practitioners asked how desired they believe the credentials to be on a scale of 1 to 5.

- The eighth section for educators contained open and close-ended questions that addressed the structure of public relations programs.

The survey ended with demographic questions (see tables 1 and 2).

Distribution

The survey was distributed via email to CPRE members who were then responsible for inviting, via emails and social media, members of their organizations and colleagues, to participate in the survey. The survey was open between October 10 thru December 19, 2016 for participation. Almost all member associations participated in distributing the survey to their members. Given that the survey distribution was through the Commission member associations, using their own recruitment process, it is not possible to calculate the number of people who actually received the survey. After the data were cleaned, a total of 815 people completed the survey: 318 educators and 497 practitioners.

Survey findings are described throughout this report.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Educator Demographics

Gender

Female	40.4% (n=105)
Male	59.2% (n=154)
Do not identify as male, female, or transgender	0.4% (n=1)

Age

26-35	10.5% (n=23)
36-45	19.8% (n=43)
46-55	27.2% (n=59)
56-65	25.3% (n=55)
66-75	14.3% (n=31)
76-85	2.8% (n=6)

Race

African American/Black	2.9% (n=8)
Asian/Asian American	4.8% (n=13)
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3% (n=1)
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.3% (n=1)
White/Caucasian	76.8% (n=209)
Hispanic/Latino	5.5% (n=15)
Other	9.2% (n=25)

Highest Level of Eeducation

B.A./B.S.	5.7% (n=15)
M.A./M.S./MBA	23.7% (n=62)
Terminal Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.BA., etc.)	70.6% (n=185)

Accredited in Public Relations (APR/APR+M)   37.9% (n=92)

Number of Years Teaching Experience

1-5	13.5% (n=34)
6-10	24.6% (n=62)
11-20	35.7% (n=90)
21-30	16.3% (n=41)
31+	9.9% (n=25)

Tenured or Tenure-Track   66.5% (n=161)

Number of Years Professional Experience

1-5	28.4% (n=71)
6-10	22.4% (n=56)
11-20	24.8% (n=62)
21-30	14.0% (n=35)
31+	10.4% (n=26)

Served on a Site Visit for CEPR Certification   6.6% (n=17)

Served on a Site Visit for ACEJMC Accreditation   5.8% (n=15)

Served on CPRS Pathways Program Committee   1.6% (n=4)

Country based

US	75.7% (n=196)
Europe	11.6% (n=30)
Canada	1.2% (n=3)
South America	1.5% (n=4)
Asia-Pacific	6.6% (n=17)
Other	3.5% (n=9)

Table 2: Practitioner Demographics

Gender

Female	72.9% (n=306)
Male	26.4% (n=111)
Transgender	0.2% (n=1)
Do not identify as male, female, or transgender	0.5% (n=2)

Age

23-35	32.2% (n=122)
36-45	21.6% (n=82)
46-55	21.9% (n=83)
56-65	19.8% (n=75)
66-75	4.5% (n=17)

Race

African American/Black	1.9% (n=8)
Asian/Asian American	3.5% (n=15)
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.2% (n=5)
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.2 % (n=1)
White/Caucasian	85.9% (n=371)
Hispanic/Latino	6.0% (n=26)
Other	1.9% (n=8)

Highest Level of Eeducation

No degree	0.5% (n=2)
Technical/vocational	0.7%(n=3)
A.A./A.S.	0.7% (n=3)
B.A./B.S.	52.2% (n=217)
M.A./M.S./MBA	44.2% (n=184)
Terminal Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.BA., etc.)	1.7% (n=7)

Accredited in Public Relations (APR/APR+M)   28.4% (n=119)

Number of Years Teaching Experience

1-5	68.4% (n=277)
6-10	17.7% (n=14)
11-20	11.4% (n=9)
21-30	2.5% (n=2)

Taught as an Adjunct or Professor   19.6% (n=82)

Guest Lecturer in PR Course   58.6% (n=243)

Number of Years Teaching Experience

1-5	68.4% (n=54)
6-10	17.7% (n=14)
11-20	11.4% (n=9)
21-30	2.5% (n=2)

Organizational Setting

UAgency/consultancy	23.3% (n=98)
Corporation	27.6% (n=116)
Educational institution	12.1% (n=51)
Government/military	10.7% (n=45)
Independent practitioner	3.3% (n=14)
Nonprofit/association	15.7% (n=66)
Professional services	1.9% (n=8)
Other	5.2% (n=22)

Number of Employees at Organization

25 or less	24.6% (n=103)
26-50	6.0% (n=25)
51-100	6.5% (n=27)
101-500	14.8 (n=62)
501-1,000	8.4% (n=35)
1,001-5,000	15.1% (n=63)
More than 5,000	24.6% (n=103)

Number of Employees at Organization

25 or less	14.3% (n=31)
26-50	2.8% (n=6)
51-100	2.9% (n=8)
101-500	4.8% (n=13)
501-1,000	0.3% (n=1)
1,001-5,000	0.3% (n=1)
More than 5,000	76.8% (n=209)

Directly Involved in Supervising Entry-Level Pros   53.5% (n=222)

Supervised a PR Internship in the Last 5 Years   62.1% (n=260)

Served on a University's Governing Body   11.6% (n=49)

Served on a Site Visit for CEPR Certification   1.7% (n=7)

Served on a Site Visit for ACEJMC Accreditation   2.6% (n=11)

Served on CPRS Pathways Program Committee   1.0% (n=4)

Country Based

US	94.0% (n=392)
Europe	1.7% (n=7)
Canada	1.9% (n=8)
South America	1.0% (n=4)
Asia-Pacific	1.9% (n=8)
Other	2.2% (n=9)

HIGHLIGHT: KEY FINDINGS ON HIRING CHARACTERISTICS

There were many questions on the Omnibus Survey that were specific to a particular chapter's content, and used the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA) approach. One broader question provided over-arching insight into what practitioners were looking for on a broad basis, defined as hiring characteristics, In this section, 26 questions asked practitioners to indicate the desirability of a specific characteristic (on a 1 to 5 scale where 1=not desired and 5=highly desired) and also asked how often they observe each characteristic in entry level new hires (on a 1 to 5 scale where 1=rarely found and 5=always found) (see Table 3).

The top hiring characteristics desired were (in this order):
1. Writing performance
2. Internship or work experience
3. Public relations coursework
4. Strong references
5. Up-to-date with professional trends and issues

What the practitioners actually found among their new hires identified some key differences. The top hiring characteristics found were (in this order):
1. Active on social media
2. Public relations coursework
3. Internship or work experience
4. Campus involvement
5. Strong references

All of the characteristics had lower levels of how frequently the characteristics were found except for being active on social media, campus involvement and having liberal arts coursework – all three of these characteristics were found at a rate higher than how much they are desired. Campus involvement is often an opportunity for students to gain valuable immersion experience or gain valuable experience in teamwork and determination as with sports, but not all campus experience is created equally. It is possible that some other campus activities are not as valued. Seeing that a liberal arts education is not as

valued as it is found is surprising. For years, having a broad understanding of life was valued to more of a trade school approach that trains students on a specified skill. The Commission still highly values public relations being grounded in a liberal arts education.

The gap between how desired writing performance is and how frequently it is found is alarming. Writing is core to an undergraduate education in public relations. Students receive multiple courses in writing and broadly speaking, writing ability remains a challenge. Some programs have higher entry to major requirements; therefore, those schools do not admit students who do not meet certain levels of writing ability. However, many practitioners do not require a degree in public relations when hiring for entry-level positions. This means that the field is flooded with students who went to programs lacking a strong writing focus, no or a low barrier to entry to major, and students who did not get a public relations degree but want to work in the field.

Other interesting findings in in hiring characteristics include the gap between the desire for internship experiences and the rate they are found. More on internships can be found in Chapter 13 but given the high number of students who participate in internships, this discrepancy could be related to the number or possibly the quality of internships the students are completing.

Having a diverse or multicultural perspective was found to be more desired than being a diverse entry-level candidate. It has long been acknowledged that the public relations field has a diversity challenge. While improved diversity in entry-level practitioners is needed, attention to providing students with a diverse or multicultural perspective is also important. Study abroad was rated low so it appears that this perspective should be more frequently addressed within the classroom curriculum. Additional information on diversity can be found in Chapter 15.

An online portfolio was found to be more highly desired than a hard-copy portfolio, and neither were found at the rate they are valued. Additionally, new hires were found to not to be as up to date on professional trends and issues as desired. Few students keep up with news unless it is required, so like the news, keeping up with professional trends should be incorporated into the coursework.

Table 3: Student Hiring Characteristics/Experience

	Desired	Found
Writing performance	M=4.85, SD=0.44	M=2.90, SD=0.87
Internship or work experience	M=4.62, SD=0.77	M=3.79, SD=0.90
Public relations coursework	M=4.45, SD=0.84	M=3.94, SD=0.85
Strong references	M=4.18, SD=0.95	M=3.34, SD=0.83
Up-to-date with professional trends and issues	M=4.09, SD=0.93	M=2.78, SD=0.88
Leadership experience	M=3.95, SD=0.96	M=2.75, SD=0.87
Business coursework	M=3.88, SD=0.95	M=2.50, SD=0.94
Active on social media	M=3.87, SD=0.98	M=4.36, SD=0.78
Diverse/multicultural perspective	M=3.81, SD=0.99	M=2.82, SD=0.84
Active on student media	M=3.71, SD=1.00	M=2.81, SD=0.87
Participation in on-campus student PR agency	M=3.62, SD=1.10	M=2.43, SD=0.99
Degree in PR	M=3.55, SD=1.20	M=3.27, SD=0.99
Active in PR organizations (PRSSA, IABC, etc.)	M=3.48, SD=1.16	M=2.76, SD=0.92
Online portfolio	M=3.48, SD=1.12	M=2.76, SD=1.02
Diversity of the candidate	M=3.46, SD=1.08	M=2.65, SD=0.84
Volunteer work	M=3.45, SD=1.01	M=2.96, SD=0.91
Campus involvement	M=3.36, SD=1.07	M=3.44, SD=0.86
Interest in culture	M=3.34, SD=1.05	M=2.93, SD=0.90
Hard copy portfolio	M=3.32, SD=1.19	M=2.89, SD=1.11
High GPA	M=3.23, SD=1.03	M=3.19, SD=0.69
Liberal Arts Coursework	M=3.21, SD=1.11	M=3.39, SD=1.05
Bi/Multi-Lingual	M=3.21, SD=1.23	M=2.03, SD=0.87
Caliber of University	M=3.03, SD=1.08	M=2.99, SD=0.71
Certifications (Hootsuite, Google Analytics)	M=2.87, SD=1.20	M=1.91, SD=0.88
Study abroad	M=2.43, SD=1.16	M=2.31, SD=0.92
Certificate in Principles	M=2.41, SD=1.20	M=1.69, SD=0.92

Limitations of the Survey

The Omnibus Survey, by design, did not address graduate education. It had a low response from individuals outside the United States. Furthermore, as is common with survey research, the participants were required to self-define many terms included in the report, including such terms as public relations, research, analytics, and certification.

The term public relations is especially important given that this is a report about undergraduate education in public relations. Over the past few years, university programs have been adjusting their department, program and degree terminology. This report did not explore the current state of terminology; however, it should be noted that there has been a shift in terminology in academic programs and in the profession. Integrated communication is gaining popularity and questions have been raised about the benefit of a degree called "public relations" compared to one called "strategic communication."

"Since the 2006 report was the last time undergraduate education was broadly addressed, and there have been so many changes in both practice and education, it was clearly time for a deep dive into this topic."

Learning Objectives:
What Do Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do for Entry-Level Positions?

Learning Outcomes Chapter Team

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Overview

Educators and practitioners value the knowledge areas of diversity and inclusion, ethics, and social and global issues; skills that include writing, research and analytics, media relations, and ability to communicate; and abilities that include critical thinking and problem solving. Additionally, educators and practitioners increasingly value the importance of social media management and research and analytics.

2016 Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) Omnibus Survey findings show there is still a gap between what educators believe they are teaching and what practitioners believe they find in new hires—a continuing issue in public relations education. However, practitioners and educators did agree that new hires possess knowledge in three of the areas deemed most important: ethics, diversity and inclusion, and social issues. Unfortunately, both groups believe that entry-level practitioners are lacking in the skills and abilities required for writing, research and analytics, media relations and ability to communicate, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Introduction

Educators need clearly identified public relations learning outcomes to guide their efforts to teach students the necessary information and skills to be successful in an entry-level public relations position. Learning outcomes have become increasingly important due to the focus on assessment in academia. Indeed, outcomes are instrumental to university accreditation expectations, as well as the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and the Public Relations Society of America certification standards. Educators' course syllabi must articulate expected learning outcomes and how educators will determine whether the outcomes have been achieved. For this project, outcomes were defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). The outcomes chapter identifies what KSAs public relations students should possess for an entry-level public relations position, how well educators think their students are prepared in these areas, and to what extent practitioners believe new hires have the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

SECTION 1: How Educators and Practitioners Rate the Importance of KSAs

NOTE: In the charts in this chapter, KSAs were rated on a five-point scale, and were deemed "important" if they scored above 3.5.

1.1 Knowledge
Practitioners and educators rated the importance of 12 knowledge areas for the preparation of an entry-level public relations position. As indicated by Table 1.1, both educators and practitioners (combined) regarded the following knowledge areas as important: (1) ethics, (2) diversity and inclusion, (3) cultural perspective, (4) business acumen, (5) social issues, and (6) PR laws and regulations affecting PR. Both educators and practitioners rated knowledge of ethics as the most desirable.

Table 1.1
Importance of Knowledge Areas Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have and Assessment of Whether They Do Have This Knowledge (Practitioner and Educator Responses Combined)
Note: Boldface numbers indicate a large gap between whether entry-level practitioners do have what respondents believe they "should have."

Knowledge	Knowledge Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M)	Knowledge Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M)
Ethics	**4.51**	**3.61**
Diversity & inclusion	3.95	3.29
Cultural perspective	3.83	3.06
Business acumen	**3.76**	**2.40**
Social issues	3.73	3.27
PR laws and regulations affecting PR	**3.60**	**2.61**
PR theory	3.44	3.33
Global perspectives	3.41	2.69
Internal or employee communication	**3.59**	**2.69**
Crisis management	2.86	2.22
Management	2.79	2.22
PR history	2.33	2.65

1.2 Skills
The survey next asked educators and practitioners to assess 13 skills in terms of desirability and observability.

Table 1.2
Importance of Skills Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have and Assessment of Whether They Do Have These Skills (Practitioner and Educator Responses Combined)
Note: Boldface numbers indicate a large gap between whether entry-level practitioners do have what respondents believe they "should have."

Skills	Skills Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have(M)	Skills Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have(M)
Writing	**4.85**	**3.47**
Communication	**4.75**	**3.72**
Social media management	4.39	3.74
Research & analytics	**4.16**	**3.11**
Editing	**4.11**	**2.81**
Media relations	**4.01**	**2.96**
Storytelling	**3.98**	**2.77**
Public speaking	**3.54**	**2.91**
Graphic design	3.00	2.47
Audio/video production	2.94	2.38
Website development	2.93	2.31
Speechwriting	2.89	2.05
App development	2.07	1.60

As indicated by Table 1.2, both educators and practitioners indicated that writing, communication, and social media management are the top three highly desired skills, but there are significant gaps between ratings on many of the skills they should have versus what they do have.

1.3 Abilities

When asked to rate the most-desired abilities, educators and practitioners agreed that the top three abilities for new hires and recent graduates to have are creative thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking. These results yield important reflections for educators, especially considering that most practitioners expect more of these abilities than current entry-level practitioners offer.

Additionally, educators and practitioners agreed that creative thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking are the top three observed abilities in current new hires/recent graduates.

Table 1.3

Importance of Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have and Assessment of Whether They Do Have These Abilities (Practitioner and Educator Responses Combined)

Note: Boldface numbers indicate a large gap between whether entry-level practitioners do have what respondents believe they "should have."

Abilities	Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M)	Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M)
Creative thinking	**4.53**	**3.47**
Problem solving	**4.49**	**3.12**
Critical thinking	**4.45**	**3.07**
Analytical thinking	4.38	3.03
Strategic planning	3.58	2.75

SECTION 1: How Educators and Practitioners Differ in Assessing the Importance of the KSAs Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have and Do Have

2.1 Knowledge

Overall, educators identified more knowledge areas as desirable than did practitioners (see Table 2.1). Of the 12 knowledge areas, educators rated nine as desired (measured above a 3.5 mean on the 5-point scale), while practitioners rated only five as desired. Independent samples t-tests found that educators were statistically significantly more likely to rate the desired knowledge higher than practitioners on nine items.

Practitioners rated the following knowledge areas as most desired: ethics; diversity and inclusion; cultural perspective; social issues; and business acumen (see Table 2). Educators ranked the following areas as most desired: ethics; cultural perspective; business acumen; diversity and inclusion; internal or employee communication; social issues; PR laws and regulations affecting PR; global perspectives and PR theory. Neither group gave crisis management, PR history, or management means above 3.5.

Educators were more likely to positively evaluate their students in terms of having these knowledge areas than were practitioners, in terms of indicating they see this knowledge among new hires, as detailed on Table 2.1. The biggest gaps between practitioners' evaluations and educators' evaluations of knowledge were found in the areas of crisis management and management, where the mean difference between the groups was greater than a full point.

The difference between what educators believe they are teaching and what practitioners believe they find in new hires continues to be an issue in public relations education. The 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond" revealed similar differences between educators and practitioners. On a positive note, practitioners' responses did indicate progress in three of the areas they deemed most important, namely knowledge of ethics, diversity and inclusion, and social issues.

Table 2.1

Table 2.1
Knowledge Entry-Level Practitioners SHOULD Have and DO Have, According to Practitioners and Educators

Knowledge	PRACTITIONERS		EDUCATORS	
	Knowledge Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M/SD)	Knowledge Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M/SD)	Knowledge Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M/SD)	Knowledge Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M/SD)
Ethics	**4.57/0.76	**3.34/0.99	4.41/0.99	4.01/1.00
Diversity & inclusion	3.95/1.06	3.27/1.02	3.89/1.05	3.32/1.20
Cultural perspective	**3.72/1.01	**2.85/0.97	4.00/0.92	3.38/1.13
Business acumen	**3.65/1.09	**2.07/0.87	3.92/1.02	2.92/1.12
Social issues	3.67/1.00	**3.17/0.98	3.81/0.99	3.43/1.07
PR laws and regulations affecting PR	**3.48/1.19	**2.42/1.15	3.80/1.08	3.09/1.14
PR theory	*3.36/1.20	**3.02/1.08	3.58/1.27	3.83/1.00
Global perspectives	**3.20/1.13	**2.35/0.96	3.73/1.01	3.23/1.10
Internal or employee communication	**3.44/1.16	**2.39/1.02	3.82/0.96	3.17/1.18
Crisis management	**2.52/1.16	**1.49/0.72	3.40/1.09	3.37/1.18
Management	**2.39/1.21	**1.72/0.86	3.43/1.10	3.02/1.19
PR history	**2.15/1.13	**2.42/1.15	2.61/1.26	3.00/1.18

** p < .01; * p < .05
Independent samples t-tests were run for each KSA to compare what educators and practitioners desired and to compare what educators and practitioners found.

2.2 Skills

As indicated by Table 2.2 below, educators and practitioners agree on the top three skills that entry-level practitioners should have: writing, communications, and social media management. Practitioners and educators agree that technical skills such as graphic design, audio/video production, speech writing, website development, and app development are less important, suggesting that educators should focus more on developing strategic communication skills rather than technical ones.

In terms of what they observe, practitioners and educators agreed that entry-level practitioners possess social media management skills. For the other eleven skills, educators tended to have a more optimistic view than practitioners in terms of whether or not entry-level practitioners actually have the desired skills. Practitioners believe that entry-level practitioners lack sufficient research and analytics, media relations, and public speaking skills; both practitioners and educators think entry-level practitioners have some communication skills, but practitioners indicated they saw the presence of those skills less (see Table 2.2). The difference between the opinions of these two groups for these four skills is on average 1.1 higher in educators than practitioners (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Skills
Skills Entry-Level Practitioners SHOULD Have and DO Have, According to Practitioners and Educators

| Skills | PRACTITIONERS | | EDUCATORS | |
	Skills Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M/SD)	Skills Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M/SD)	Skills Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M/SD)	Skills Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M/SD)
Writing	4.87/.42	**3.04/0.95	4.83/0.47	4.17/0.92
Communication	4.75/.56	**3.29/0.89	4.76/0.53	4.40/0.82
Social media management	**4.33/0.81	3.79/.92	4.50/.65	3.67/1.02
Research & analytics	**4.07/.99	**2.69/0.94	4.30/0.86	3.78/1.04
Editing	4.16/0.98	**2.55/0.95	4.03/0.93	3.21/1.16
Media relations	**3.91/0.98	**2.54/0.97	4.16/0.90	3.63/1.09
Storytelling	4.03/1.04	**2.50/0.93	3.91/1.02	3.19/1.06
Public Speaking	**3.32/1.22	**2.46/0.99	3.91/1.00	3.64/1.14
Graphic design	*2.93/1.09	**2.55/0.95	3.11/1.02	2.66/1.09
Audio/video production	**2.85/1.10	**2.22/0.94	3.07/1.09	2.65/1.22
Website development	**2.84/1.21	**2.22/0.99	3.08/1.10	2.46/1.14
Speechwriting	2.85/1.13	**1.86/0.86	2.96/1.11	2.37/1.17
App development	**1.91/1.07	1.62/0.85	2.32/1.12	1.58/0.88

** p < .01; * p < .05
Independent samples t-tests were run for each KSA to compare what educators and practitioners desired and to compare what educators and practitioners found.

Section 2.3 Abilities

When asked to rate the most-desired abilities, educators and practitioners agreed that the top three abilities for new entry-level hires to have are creative thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking (see Table 2.3). These results yield important reflections for educators, especially considering that most practitioners expect to see more of these abilities than current entry-level practitioners offer.

Practitioners indicated that entry-level practitioners possess sufficient creative thinking but lack problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities. Practitioners also indicated that strategic planning abilities are deficient in new hires. However, educators indicated that entry-level practitioners do possess such abilities (as indicated by a mean above 3.5). Statistically, these two groups differ, suggesting that practitioners disagree with educators' assessment that their programs appropriately teach students these abilities.

Table 2.3 Abilities
Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have and Do Have, According to Practitioners and Educators

| Abilities | PRACTITIONERS | | EDUCATORS | |
	Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M/SD)	Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M/SD)	Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Should Have (M/SD)	Abilities Entry-Level Practitioners Do Have (M/SD)
Creative thinking	4.55/0.71	**3.34/0.95	4.50/0.73	3.67/0.99
Problem solving	4.49/0.79	**2.72/0.89	4.50/0.71	3.76/1.01
Critical thinking	4.43/0.82	**2.62/0.89	4.49/0.78	3.80/1.02
Analytical thinking	*4.33/0.84	**2.59/0.88	4.46/0.77	3.74/0.97
Strategic planning	**3.33/1.29	**2.05/0.92	4.00/1.07	3.87/1.06

** p < .01; * p < .05
Independent samples t-tests were run for each KSA to compare what educators and practitioners desired and to compare what educators and practitioners found.

"The difference between what educators believe they are teaching and what practitioners believe they find in new hires continues to be an issue in public relations education."

2.4 Educator and Practitioner Responses to an Open-Ended Question About Importance of KSAs

Finally, the survey asked respondents to express their views on top KSAs for entry-level PR positions in an open-ended question. The results (see Table 3) indicate again the importance of skills and abilities over specific knowledge for both educators and practitioners. The top five most-desired KSAs are: writing (n=457), research and analytics (n=173), social media management (n=150, problem solving (n=172) and critical thinking (n=141), with practitioners emphasizing problem solving after writing skills whereas educators emphasize research and analytics.

Table 2.4
Most-Desired KSAs for Entry-Level PR Positions According to Educators and Practitioners, as Asked in an OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

KSA	Combined (n) % 815 total	Eduators (n) 318 total	Practitioners (n) 497 total
Writing	(457) 56%	(153) 48%	(304) 61%
Research and analytics	(173) 21%	(79) 25%	(94) 19%
Problem solving	(172) 21%	(51) 16%	(121) 24%
Social media management	(150) 18%	(70) 22%	(80) 16%
Critical thinking	(141) 17%	(59) 19%	(82) 16%
Strategic planning	(126) 15%	(56) 18%	(70) 14%
Business acumen	(118) 14%	(48) 15%	(70) 14%
Creative thinking	(116) 14%	(38) 12%	(78) 16%
Communication	(111) 14%	(30) 9%	(81) 16%
Media relations	(102) 13%	(34) 11%	(68) 14%
Ethics	(90) 11%	(30) 9%	
Editing	(78) 10%	(16) 5%	(62) 12%

See Appendix A for a longer list of other KSAs that were mentioned.

2.5 Traits

The survey also asked, in an open-ended question, what practitioners and educators believe are the five most-desired student traits not typically taught in the classroom (see Table 4). These traits are important for educators to know and understand, and provide a deeper look into what practitioners desire in a new hire. Educators should make students aware of these desired traits, and help develop traits in which students are lacking. Interestingly, even though educators and practitioners tended to rate KSAs differently in the close-ended questions, they agreed regarding desired traits. Both educators and practitioners identified curiosity/desire to learn (n = 149), creativity (n = 101), collaborative team player (n = 82), hardworking (n = 76), initiative (n = 68), and time management/punctuality (n = 63) as the most-desired student traits.

Table 2.5

Most-Desired Student Traits (or Qualities) Not Typically Taught in the Classroom

Trait	Combined (n)	Eduators (n)	Practitioners (n)
Top Desired Traits			
Curiosity/desire to learn	149	75	74
Creativity	101	41	60
Collaborative/team-player	92	28	54
Hardworking	76	27	49
Initiative	68	27	41
Time management/ punctuality	63	25	38
Other Desired Traits			
Flexible/adaptable	48	24	24
Listener	42	17	25
People person	38	17	21
Ethical	36	12	24
Detail-oriented	36	11	25

Progress Since "The Professional Bond"

A direct comparison of educator and practitioner feedback about KSAs from 2006 to 2016 is not possible due to differences in survey questions. The 2006 survey asked educators and practitioners to indicate what public relations students, advanced-level practitioners, and public relations educators should be able to do on the job and what both groups observed. The 2016 Omnibus Survey asked educators and practitioners to focus exclusively on entry-level practitioners.

However, some observations are notable. Overall, from 2006 to 2016 there have been only a few changes in terms of desired KSAs for undergraduate students. Educators and practitioners continue to want entry-level people to be knowledgeable about diversity and inclusion, ethics, and social and global issues; skills in writing, research and analytics, media relations, and communications; and abilities that include critical thinking and problem solving. On a positive note, more practitioners in 2016 than 2006 believe that entry-level hires are knowledgeable about ethics, diversity and inclusion, and social issues.

On a negative note, gaps still exist. Practitioners responded in both years that they didn't see the needed skills of writing, research and analytics, media relations and ability to communicate, critical thinking and problem solving. These gaps suggest that educators must continue to focus on developing these skills sets. One other key difference from 2006 to 2016 is the growing importance of social media management and research and analytics.

Observations Regarding 2016 Omnibus Survey Findings

Overall Observations
The results of the 2016 Omnibus Survey indicate that the most-demanded KSAs are not knowledge areas, but skills and abilities, suggestive that the labor market is most concerned about what entry-level practitioners can do and produce when they enter in the market. That said, students clearly need a solid knowledge base for the needed skills and abilities. For example, in order to write strategically in the global economy and with efficacy in numerous platforms, particularly considering the complexity of current media systems, undergraduate students must have a solid understanding of communication and public relations theories, global and cultural communication, social issues, ethics, and more. In order to research and analyze, students need knowledge areas that have been highlighted in the survey, such as social issues and internal communication, as well as knowledge on diverse research methods and approaches to analyze and discover insights. To problem solve in an efficient way for organizations, students must have a foundational understanding of public relations theory, business strategy, internal communication, ethics, and PR laws and regulations to be able to put problems into perspective and assess the internal, external, and global consequences of considered solutions.

Even though educators and practitioners did not rate crisis communication, management, and PR history as highly desirable on the 2016 Omnibus Survey, the authors of this chapter still see all three as important knowledge areas that undergraduate public relations programs can and should include.

Diversity and Inclusion Observations
Diversity and inclusion and cultural perspective are inextricably related. Diversity and inclusion are instrumental to both internal stakeholder management and external communication, particularly in global campaigns. Cultural perspective can transcend organizational culture, societal culture, and individual culture. International organizations may face challenges across these types of culture, especially if the organizational culture does not completely fit with the local/societal culture of the host country and if people working for that organization are from a culture different from the host country and organization. Educators can foster the outcomes of diversity and inclusion, and cultural perspective across the curriculum and in many ways. Educators can use global case studies and current event examples to teach students how to consider diversity and inclusion, and cultural perspectives when making public relations decisions.

To deepen students' understanding and appreciation of diversity, educators can invite speakers from backgrounds that differ in terms of ethnicity, religion, and other demographic and psychographics dimensions. Students should be encouraged to join international student organizations on campus and to study abroad to deepen their appreciation of diverse cultures and

ways of thinking, so that they will be more prepared to enter careers in advertising and public relations that increasingly require that students connect with and engage stakeholders across the world.

Social Issues Observations

Social issues are problems that influence individuals within a society. Issues may include poverty, climate change, immigration, and gun control, among others. Knowledge on social issues refers to an awareness and knowledge about what social issues specific communities believe are most important. Educators can foster students' understanding of social issues by teaching them how to monitor and understand the environment in order to detect opportunities and threats, to align the organization with the societal environment in a reflective way, and to advise organizational leaders and other people in the organization about how to communicate regarding each social issue.

Ethics Observations

Practitioners and educators rated ethics as the most important knowledge area for the undergraduate public relations curriculum in 2006 and in 2016. Ethics training remains essential for practitioners who continue to fill important and visible roles in their organizations in a complex, interconnected world. Practitioners today face important ethical dilemmas such as privacy and fake news, the use of big data, and automatization. University programs should provide students with the place and time to reflect and stimulate creativity and problem solve skills in these ethical concerns. Public relations educators should continue to focus on ethical case studies and discussion and to foster and encourage a consideration of ethics in all content and classes of public relations education. Even when educators ask students to provide solutions to typical problems that are not specific about questionable practices or ethical situations, students should ponder public relations solutions in relation to ethical consequences and implications. Because ethical behavior stems from personal character and values, not just knowing codes and theories, public relations education should sensitize students to the ethical issues facing the practice and provide examples and exemplars of moral courage.

Social Media Observations

Given the continuing and growing use of social media among both the general public and public relations practitioners, university programs should incorporate social media training into the curriculum. The fact that university students are digital natives and proficient users of social media does not mean they understand how to use social media to advance public relations goals and planning. As students adapt to continuous changes in platforms and media, they need to understand why they need to communicate on various social media platforms. Students also need to understand how to define storytelling guidelines and how communication contributes to organizations where practitioners work. University programs should teach students how to use social media platforms both strategically and tactically.

Research and Analytics Observations

Entry-level practitioners also need strong analytic and interpretation capacities, as indicated by practitioners' and educators' high ratings of these skills and abilities. University programs can embed research and analytical assignments in research and campaign classes. Other ways to augment research and analytical skills include encouraging or requiring students to take statistics and business classes and to become proficient in analytical platforms. Moreover, qualitative research is an essential skill set for the entry-level public relations practitioner. Cultural, global, and diversity-related issues require strategies that take into consideration the specific cultural elements, and these cannot be fully comprehended via quantitative methods. University programs should teach students to listen via qualitative approaches such as digital and social listening and case study analysis in order to have a more robust understanding of how to discover key insights and to find the best solutions for organizations. In summary, university programs must help students to understand how to use numbers and qualitative methods to discover insights to drive public relations strategy.

Communication and Storytelling Observations

Production skills—such as graphic design, audio/video production, and website and mobile app development—seem to take a back seat to the desire for overall communication and storytelling skills. While these skills may still be important in smaller organizations that do not have their own production facilities or can't afford to outsource production, the ability to communicate using appropriate messages and channels appears to be more important than the packaging of those messages.

Abilities and Traits Observations

As indicated by the survey results, undergraduate students must possess a wide range of abilities—strategic planning, problem solving, analytical thinking, critical thinking, and creative thinking. University undergraduate programs can teach these intangible abilities by encouraging students to critique, problem solve, and create. Educators can foster creativity and problem solving by using collaborative methodologies such as project-based learning or case studies, where professors evaluate students' problem-solving abilities. Educators should encourage students to explain their rationale for recommended strategic and creative solutions in both written and oral deliveries.

Student traits, tied to their abilities to work successfully in a professional environment, are also important to educators and practitioners. Traits such as curiosity, creativity, collaboration, hard work, and initiative seldom appear as topics in public relations curricula, but educators can foster and reinforce them through pedagogical choices. Educators can use group projects with real clients that require evaluation by clients. Student group members can evaluate one another based upon their collaboration, initiative, and work ethic. Programs can foster student creativity and initiative in student competitions and student clubs and organizations.

Recommendations

Based upon the results of the 2016 Omnibus Survey, chapter authors recommend that undergraduate public relations programs should design curricula and experiential learning so that students acquire knowledge and skills in the following areas:

KNOWLEDGE areas that entry-level practitioners should have:
Ethics (See Chapter 5)
Diversity and inclusion (See Chapter 15)
Cultural perspective
Global perspective (See Chapter 16)
Social issues
Public relations theory (See Chapter 6)
Public relations laws and regulations affecting PR
Business acumen
Internal or employee communication

SKILLS an entry-level practitioner should have:
Research and analytics
Writing
Media relations
Social media management
Editing
Public speaking
Storytelling
Communication

Chapter authors also recommend:

- **Educators should encourage students to take interdisciplinary courses in a wide range of subjects, including the humanities and social sciences.** A broad liberal arts education is an important part of an undergraduate public relations education. Many of the knowledge areas deemed most desirable by practitioners and educators in 2016—ethics, diversity and inclusion, cultural perspective, and social issues—are inherent in a quality liberal arts education.

- **Undergraduate programs should emphasize and strengthen writing and communication skills associated with other important skills, such as storytelling, editing, and media relations, by offering students exercises or experiences that stimulate writing and communication skills across a variety of formats, genres, and styles and for diverse communication purposes and situations.** Writing remains the most demanded skill in the entry-level market. Educators should utilize writing assignments whenever possible in public relations courses. Educators can help students take responsibility for their writing development by encouraging them to write for student journalism organizations and to consult with university writing centers and on class assignments.

- **Public relations undergraduate programs should encourage or require undergraduate public relations students to minor in business or take business classes to augment the communication knowledge and skills they are receiving in their public relations education.** Practitioners and educators identified business acumen as an important knowledge area for entry-level practitioners, but indicated that entry-level practitioners were lacking in this area.

"The most-demanded KSAs are not knowledge areas, but skills and abilities, suggestive that the labor market is most concerned about what entry-level practitioners can do and produce."

Additional Responses From Table 2.4 Other Desired KSAs for Entry-Level PR Positions According to Educators and Practitioners, as Asked in an OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

KSA	Combined (n) 815 total	Eduators (n) 318 total	Practitioners (n) 497 total
Storytelling	(69) 8%	(16) 5%	(53) 11%
Analytical thinking	(67) 8%	(30) 9%	(37) 7%
Management	(56) 7%	(24) 8%	(32) 6%
Public speaking	(52) 6%	(25) 8%	(27) 5%
Strategic thinking	(45) 6%	(19) 6%	(26) 5%
Teamwork	(45) 6%	(18) 6%	(27) 5%
PR theory	(35) 4%	(17) 5%	(18) 4%
Global perspective	(32) 4%	(12) 4%	(20) 4%
Time management	(32) 4%	(7) 2%	(25) 5%
Graphic design	(29) 4%	(13) 4%	(16) 3%
Internal or employee communication	(25) 3%	(9) 3%	(16) 3%
Audio/video production	(25) 3%	(8) 3%	(17) 3%
Crisis management	(24) 3%	(13) 4%	(11) 2%
Cultural perspective	(24) 3%	(9) 3%	(15) 3%
Interpersonal communication	(23) 3%	(13) 4%	(10) 2%
PR laws and regulations affecting PR	(22) 3%	(15) 5%	(7) 1%
Social issues	(20) 2%	(10) 3%	(10) 2%
Diversity & inclusion	(17) 2%	(7) 2%	(10) 2%
Marketing	(16) 2%	(7) 2%	(9) 2%
Social media content creation	(15) 2%	(7) 2%	(8) 2%
Client management	(14) 2%	(5) 2%	(8) 2%
Professionalism	(14) 2%	(0) 0%	(14) 3%
Digital literacy	(12) 1%	(7) 2%	(5) 1%
Relationship building/management	(12) 1%	(5) 2%	(7) 1%
Technology	(12) 1%	(4) 1%	(8) 2%
Other discipline/outside knowledge or experience	(11) 1%	(7) 2%	(4) 1%
PR foundation/in practice	(11) 1%	(4) 1%	(7) 1%
Website development	(10) 1%	(3) 1%	(7) 1%
Organization	(10) 1%	(3) 1%	(7) 1%
Audience orientation/segmentation	(9) 1%	(4) 1%	(5) 1%
Campaign evaluation	(9) 1%	(4) 1%	(5) 1%
Budgeting	(9) 1%	(2) 1%	(7) 1%
Risk & issues management	(8) 1%	(6) 2%	(2) 0.4%
Governmental relations	(8) 1%	(5) 2%	(3) 1%
Branding	(8) 1%	(3) 1%	(5) 1%
IMC	(8) 1%	(2) 1%	(6) 1%
Leadership	(7) 1%	(4) 1%	(3) 1%
Pitching	(7) 1%	(1) 0.3%	(6) 1%

Undergraduate Curriculum:
Courses and Content to Prepare the
Next Generation of Public Relations Practitioners

Undergraduate Curriculum Team

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Overview

The Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) continues to recommend a core curriculum of the five-course sequence developed in 2006, with the addition of a sixth course. This would result in a core curriculum that includes public relations principles, research, writing, campaigns and case studies, and supervised work experience or internship, plus a newly recommended sixth course in public relations ethics. There are six topics that needed to be covered within this set of required courses: social media, strategic communications, measurement and evaluation, content creation (educators and practitioners are in agreement on these four), campaign management (rated in the top five by educators), and publicity and media relations (which was a top-five pick by practitioners). Ideally, each course and topic listed should be taught in a framework specific to public relations, whenever possible.

In addition, educators and practitioners identified a need for students to gain knowledge in five areas of growing importance to the practice. These areas are business literacy, content creation, analytics, digital technology, and measurement and evaluation. These were identified as additional "wish list" courses, with the understanding that it is unlikely that any program could offer or require all of these as stand-alone courses. The hope is that these areas can be taught within the existing PR requirements (as there is some overlap with the recommended topics list described above); but if students need to take courses offered by other departments, the chapter authors recommend that public relations programs assist students in finding opportunities to acquire the exposure they need.

Introduction

A long-standing focus of CPRE has been the quality and content of undergraduate coursework in public relations. Ongoing investigations by practitioners and educators have revealed that certain professional requirements change over time while others, including ethics, interdisciplinary knowledge, and a global perspective, remain essential to effective public relations work. The challenge of bridging inevitable gaps between the classroom and the practice is heightened in an environment in which employers demand knowledge, skills, and competencies for a fast-changing marketplace, while universities are pressured to reduce the time and expense required for a bachelor's degree. Accreditation, general education, and other university requirements unavoidably compress the coursework that can be dedicated to public relations. Moreover, many universities outside the major industry hubs, let alone in emerging markets, are limited in their number of faculty members whose scholarly or industry background would allow them to assess and adjust curricula. Thus, CPRE relies on its membership of practitioners and educators to assess and report changing requirements of the practice and make recommendations regarding the base components of an effective public relations program.

> "It is understood that adding a sixth course is a significant recommendation; CPRE believes adding a required course in ethics is an essential change."

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Survey questions applicable to undergraduate education independently collected educator and practitioner feedback on public relations coursework and curriculum areas of study. Responses to those questions are summarized here.

SECTION 1: Required Courses

Educator Insights on Public Relations Curriculum
Respondents were asked to indicate the presence and importance of five courses identified in the 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond" as essential to an undergraduate program in public relations: introduction/principles, research methods, writing, campaigns and case studies, and supervised work experience or internship. While all five of the courses are offered, three are more often required (see Table 1), according to educators responding to the survey, and there are differences in whether the content of each course is specifically focused on public relations.

- Nearly all educators reported that their undergraduate degree program requires an introductory/principles course and a research methods course. However, whereas the introductory course is overwhelmingly public relations-specific in these programs, fewer than half of research methods courses are specific to public relations research.

- Writing courses are more frequently focused on public relations writing in undergraduate education. That is, nearly all educators reported that a writing course is required for public relations majors, and most of these courses are specific to public relations writing.

- Campaigns and case studies classes are *offered* in nearly all programs, with most being required and specifically designed for public relations practice.

- Respondents overwhelmingly (90.0%) reported inclusion of supervised work experience, or an internship, in their undergraduate programs, but *only half* require students to complete an internship, and just over half offer internships specifically in public relations.

Table 1
Are Recommended Core Courses Currently Being Offered?
Educators responding to the survey reported the following:

Five Required Courses Currently Recommended by CPRE	Percentage of Programs Requiring the Course	Percentage of Programs in Which Course Content Is Public Relations–Specific
Introductory/principles	94.1%	87.4%
Research methods	90.0%	**46.8%**
Writing	90.3%	79.9%
Campaigns/case studies	79.9% (93.5% offer the course but 18.3% do not require it)	82.2%
Internships	**51.3%** (90% include in the curriculum but 45.7% do not require)	**58.8%**

NOTE: Percentages in bold are areas where improvement seems needed and should be further studied by CPRE in 2018.

In addition to the six-course subset of introduction/principles, research methods, writing, campaigns and case studies, supervised work experience or internship, and ethics, educators reported that there are a number of other courses that are required in some undergraduate programs, including audio/video production, law, marketing, integrated marketing communication, advertising, public speaking, ethics, communication theory, strategy, crisis management, business, graphic design, media relations, journalism, and social media. When educators were asked *what other courses should be required* of all public relations majors, they suggested analytics, business fundamentals, digital and social media, law and ethics, and multimedia storytelling.

Practitioner Insights on Public Relations Curriculum

Nearly all practitioner respondents (94.4%) agreed that the five essential courses identified in "The Professional Bond"—introduction/principles, research methods, writing, campaigns and case studies, and supervised work experience or internship—should continue to be included in undergraduate public relations programs. When asked what other courses should be required of all public relations majors, practitioner preferences were similar to those of educators, including analytics, business fundamentals, digital media and ethics. Of note, practitioners also recommended media relations, crisis communication and graphic design.

"CPRE continues to stress the importance of broad and interdisciplinary public relations education to best reflect the realities of practice in a global and increasingly digital environment."

SECTION 2: Essential Topics That Needed to Be Covered Within Required Courses

In this section of the survey, educators and practitioners were asked to rate 44 listed areas of study in terms of how essential these topics are to public relations students, using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most essential.

Both educators and practitioners provided a similar "top five," with both groups listing content creation, social media, measurement and evaluation, and strategic communications as most essential (Table 2), with one significant difference. While educators rated campaign management as an essential area of study, practitioners instead rated publicity and media relations.

Table 2
Educators' and Practitioners' Opinions on Top Five Most-Essential Topics for Study by Undergraduate Students as Part of Their Required Courses

Top Five Most Essential Areas of Content or Topics Recommended

Educators	Practitioners
Social media (4.60)	Content creation (4.52)
Strategic communications (4.58)	Strategic communications (4.47)
Measurement and evaluation (4.57)	Social media (4.46)
Campaign management (4.55) (Rated 4.17 by practitioners but not in their top five)	Measurement and evaluation (4.42)
Content creation (4.44)	Publicity and media relations (4.37) (Rated 4.30 by educators but not in their top five)

Progress Since the 2006 Report

An important part of CPRE's focus is to support academic and other preparation of undergraduate students for their first job, including identifying important factors for the curricular foundation that enables them to advance as practitioners over the course of their careers or as they pursue graduate study.

CPRE continues to stress the importance of broad and interdisciplinary public relations education to best reflect the realities of practice in a global and increasingly digital environment. To address this, the chapter authors recommend that public relations majors achieve a double major or minor in the behavioral or social sciences, business, language, or other related area of career interest. Such interdisciplinary study is necessary to provide context for communication activities and to understand the fluid dynamics of how organizations—whether in corporate, nonprofit, education, or government contexts—are impacted by political, economic, and social/cultural change pressures.

The 2016 Omnibus Survey results indicate that the five primary courses recommended in 2006 as a minimum for an undergraduate major (introduction/principles, research methods, writing, campaigns and case studies, and super-vised work experience or internship) are being offered, generally as a requirement (with the exception of internships), and for the most part, are public relations-specific in contemporary public relations programs (with the exception of research methods).

Recommendations

CPRE's 2017 recommendations expand upon the five-course minimum with skills and knowledge required in the new millennium, including a recommended sixth course in public relations ethics.

CPRE's recommendations for this current report are offered with the understanding that some universities may need to combine or otherwise reconfigure coursework to fit within the confines of their undergraduate communication pro-grams. The intention here is to provide guidance on the key contemporary elements of public relations study, based on educator and practitioner input, rather than to pre-scribe a particular framework or course of study. CPRE encourages programs to follow these recommendations and to incorporate these areas of emphasis in a manner

that fits within each university's approach to public relations education. CPRE supports and recognizes that public relations majors additionally receive extensive liberal arts and sciences preparation through general education programs that prepare them to be critical thinkers in a global society.

Recommended Curriculum: Five Plus One

Based on extensive educator and practitioner input, CPRE recommends expanding the five courses that have been recommended as a minimum sequence in undergraduate public relations programs, by adding a sixth required course in ethics. In those cases where university-based requirements or other restrictions prohibit the offering of the six-course sequence, existing courses should be designed to cover these major areas of study widely considered to be essential academically and professionally for undergraduates entering the field. Ideally, each of these six courses should be provided in a solely focused public relations context, when feasible.

It is understood that adding a sixth course is a significant recommendation; CPRE believes adding a required course in ethics is an essential change.

Practitioners and educators rated ethics as the most important knowledge area for the undergraduate PR curriculum in 2006 and in 2016. Ethics training remains essential for practitioners who continue to fill important and visible roles in their organizations in a complex global world. Practitioners today face important ethical issues such as privacy and fake news, among many others. University programs should provide students with the place and time to reflect and stimulate creativity and problem-solving skills in considering these ethical concerns. PR educators should continue to focus on ethical case studies and to foster and encourage a consideration of ethics in all content and classes of public relations education. Even when educators ask students to provide solutions to typical problems that are not specific about questionable practices or ethical situations, students should ponder public relations solutions in relation to ethical consequences and implications. Because ethical behavior stems from personal character and values, and not just knowing codes and theories, public relations education should sensitize students to the ethical issues facing the practice and provide examples and exemplars of moral courage.

Recommended Six-Course Minimum:

- **Introduction to or Principles of Public Relations**—also taught as corporate communication, communication management, and strategic communication, among other titles—may include marketing, advertising, or other mass communication concepts, but should cover the scope, function, and contexts of the profession, basic theories, strategic planning, and other approaches and concepts specifically related to the practice of public relations. Public relations history, media relations, crisis communications, and career opportunities should also be included in this introductory course if not covered elsewhere in the curriculum.

- **Research Methods**—also taught as communication research, quantitative methods, or market research, among other titles—should focus on the proper and ethical gathering, analysis, and reporting of primary and secondary data, including the use of interviews, focus groups, surveys, and analytic software.

- **Writing** may be taught as public relations writing, business communication, media writing, news writing, publicity, or other titles, but courses should include the fundamentals of grammar, style, and syntax for a variety of public relations applications and platforms, including conventional, digital, and social media channels.

- **Campaigns and Case Studies**—also taught as a planning, management, programming, or capstone course, among other titles—should provide students with an opportunity for research, application, critique, and presentation of public relations recommendations based on primary and/or secondary research, coursework, and experience to a real client or as part of a case study analysis.

- **Supervised Work Experience or Internships**—also taught as practice, co-op, field, or practicum courses, or through a student-run public relations or strategic communication firm, among other titles—should place students in program-approved positions to gain career-related experience and establish professional contacts under the supervision of an experienced communication or public relations practitioner.

- **Added Required Course: Ethics.** The newest addition to the core-course minimum, reflects not only codes of ethics advocated by professional associations, but also an exploration and refinement of an individual's personal compass for working as a practitioner who must interact with the social environment, share information used by publics for decision-making, and serve as the conduit between publics and organizations, often playing an ethical counsel role.

Recommendation: Five Additional Areas of Growing Importance to the Profession

The chapter authors recommend that it is essential that students are exposed—whether as part of public relations coursework, which would be the ideal, or through coursework outside of a student's major curriculum—to the following areas that both educators and practitioners consider essential to effective public relations education. These were identified as additional "wish list" courses, with the understanding that it is unlikely that any program could require all of them as courses. The hope is that these content areas can be taught within the existing PR requirements, but if students need to take courses offered by other departments, the chapter authors recommend that public relations programs assist them in finding opportunities to acquire the exposure they need in:

- **Business literacy,** i.e., providing students with a working knowledge of the fundamentals of corporate accounting and finance, economic thinking, capitalism, markets, and financial communications. Related to business literacy is the ability to measure, evaluate, and report public relations outcomes that support business objectives.

- **Content creation,** including writing, audio/video production, and graphic design competence for social, print, and broadcast applications.

- **Analytics** training, equipping students with the ability to gather, assess, and analyze data used for trend-spotting, policy recommendations, and forward-looking communication strategy.

- **Digital technology,** providing familiarity, use, and experience that enable students to recommend applications, channels, media, and management practices to support organizational objectives and best serve client needs.

- **Measurement and evaluation,** covering skills in tandem with and expanding upon current industry expectations and reporting practices to demonstrate the effectiveness and value of public relations for an organization.

Ethics:
The Distinctive Commitment That Defines Public Relations
As a Respected Profession

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Overview

Ethics has long been a core value of the public relations profession.

The 2006 Commission for Public Relations Education (CPRE) Report "The Professional Bond" stated: "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."

With the advent of dozens of new communications channels and methods, and growing concerns about related issues from "fake news" to the spectre of Internet bots shaping public opinion, practitioners and educators have considered how to maintain that commitment to ethics in an increasingly challenging environment.

Introduction

In the environment described above, public trust in institutions has been negatively affected (Edelman, 2017), and the essential value of truthful communication and transparency of organizations has been magnified. Given the changes in today's media and communications environment, growing skepticism of public information has led to declining public trust in institutions, businesses, governments and more. Claims of fake news and evidence of its impact on society through digital communication have shaken the confidence of the public.

News media and social media are not the only industries experiencing ethical challenges. There has been a consistent drumbeat of activity within the public relations industry. A review of 2017 and early 2018 commentary shows an unprecedented level of activity relating to the ethical practice of public relations.

In early 2017 the Public Relations Society of America issued a challenge to so-called "alternative facts," (Dvorak, 2017) noting "encouraging and perpetuating the use of alternative facts by a high-profile spokesperson reflects poorly on all communications professionals. Truth is the foundation of all effective communications. By being truthful, we build and maintain trust with the media and our customers, clients and employees. As professional communicators, we take very seriously our responsibility to communicate with honesty and accuracy."

PRSA, citing its long-standing Code of Ethics signed by all Society members, "strongly objects to any effort to deliberately misrepresent information. Honest, ethical professionals never spin, mislead or alter facts. We applaud our colleagues and professional journalists who work hard to find and report the truth."

In April 2017, the Page Society Board of Trustees voted to adopt an ethical standard of honesty in communication, resolving to confront the 'fake news' epidemic on the Internet (Arthur W. Page, 2017).

In August and September 2017, as the Commission for Public Relations Education finalized the content for this report including recommendations to be presented to the industry and the academy, the authors of the Ethics and Undergraduate Curriculum sections both recommended a significant step for public relations education: adding a sixth course to the CPRE five-course recommended curriculum approved in 2006. The CPRE curriculum recommendations are used as the standard for PRSA's Certification in Education for Public Relations program, considered the industry's gold standard.

In October 2017, on the heels of the Bell Pottinger crisis (Segal, 2018), Richard Edelman, CEO of Edelman, called for greater focus on ethics in the public relations field and development of a global code of ethics a "new PR compact" that would help to restore trust.

Responding to that call, The Global Alliance convened a "summit" meeting in Madrid in February 2018, bringing together leaders from a dozen organizations representing practitioners and educators from Europe, the U.S., Canada, Africa and many other countries around the world. The participants agreed to work collaboratively toward developing an "overarching set of principles" that will enhance individual association codes of ethics (D'Angelo, 2018).

Individual leaders in the public relations profession are wrestling with the consequences of the chaotic communication environment. Gary Sheffer, senior corporate strategist at Weber Shandwick and former chief communication officer at General Electric, wrote in a blog post on the Arthur Page Society website, "If you care about rational, fact-based discourse, I believe you realize that professional phonies and provocateurs are lurking in the dark corners of the Internet with the sole purpose of deceiving you to further their own interests….I hope the communication profession will continue to lead the way in the fight for integrity in public communication" (Page Society, 2017).

Public relations practitioners and students need to be prepared to address a range of ethical issues including transparency, truthfulness, digital ethics, and decision-making. Greater education on ethics and a model to help with ethical decision-making will help prepare the next generation to work in an environment that does not always value truth. Students need to be vigilant about information they consume as well as information they create and disseminate. This is the role of public relations education.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Data from the 2016 Omnibus Survey of public relations educators and practitioners strongly support the need for more ethics education in the college and university classroom. This chapter provides context for the findings from the study and shares recommendations for providing greater emphasis on ethics in university curricula.

Ethics in public relations have become an imperative as one of the top demands of practitioners. There were four questions on the survey relating to ethics. They sought to understand:

- how desirable educators and practitioners thought it is for individuals in entry-level positions to have ethics knowledge and behavior; and

- whether the educators in the sample thought their public relations education programs "deliver" knowledge to meet this need.

Practitioners were asked whether they typically see ethical knowledge and behaviors in the people they hire at the entry-level. Both educators and practitioners were asked about the importance of various content areas as part of a "complete education." Two of those content topics were public relations law and ethics (asked as one item), and corporate social responsibility. Practitioners' responses on a Likert scale ranged from 1 (low importance) to 5 (high importance). The analysis below compares responses from practitioners and educators, and highlights why we make the recommendation of requiring an ethics course in public relations.

Findings
Our data suggest that both educators and practitioners identify ethics knowledge as critical for new practitioners. When asked about how important ethics KSAs are for entry-level public relations positions, educators indicated strong support for ethics, with a mean score of 4.42 (SD = 0.99) on a five-point scale. Practitioners indicated even stronger support, with a mean score of 4.58 (SD = 0.77).

- Of the 30 KSAs evaluated in the question, there was an interesting difference between the two groups: educators ranked ethics *eighth* in importance while practitioners ranked it third, behind writing and communication.

There was also a marked difference between how well educators evaluated their success in preparing students to be ethical practitioners, versus what the practitioners say they actually observe in the students they hire for entry-level positions.

- When educators were asked how well the educational program where they teach prepares students on ethics, educators ranked it number three in terms of what students are prepared for, with a mean score of 4.02 (SD = 1.0), ranking it behind only communication and writing.

- On the other hand, practitioners responded that new practitioners are not well equipped to practice ethical public relations with a mean score of 3.35 (SD = 0.99). Even with that lower score, compared to the educators' assessments, *ethics was still the number two ranked KSA* (social media was number one).

Ethics knowledge is essential to public relations education; it is no longer optional or elective. Educators and practitioners were asked to evaluate how essential 45 different topics are to public relations education. Two of these topics are relevant to this chapter: *corporate social responsibility* and *ethics,* which was combined with "law" into one topic (law/ethics). Educators ranked law/ethics quite high (M = 4.38, SD = 0.83) compared to practitioners (M = 4.04, SD = 0.96). Given that practitioners had rated ethics, as one KSA, quite high, it is assumed that their lower rankings are due to the fact that it was combined with law, so the importance of ethics alone cannot be assessed. The earlier questions about ethics are likely more valuable in assessing the importance of ethics to public relations education, especially since the first questions focused on preparation of public relations students. The second topic of interest, corporate social responsibility, was also ranked higher by educators (M = 4.18, SD = 0.87) than practitioners (M = 3.62, SD = 0.92) when considering its contribution to a complete education.

Progress Since the 2006 Study

The 2006 Report found that public relations practitioners and educators believed public relations education should include a greater focus on ethics and include topics such as credibility, ethics codes, corporate social responsibility, public relations law, and transparency (CPRE, 2006). More specifically, "The Professional Bond" emphasized that "if a curriculum cannot accommodate a dedicated ethics course, short one-hour courses or mini-seminars can provide a meaningful ethics forum for students" (p.4). In addition, as noted in previous chapters of this report, the 2006 Report stated a "minimum of five courses should be required in the public relations major [including] a public relations course in law and ethics, planning and management, case studies or campaigns." Bowen's (2008) research found that as public relations practitioners advance in their careers, they are often called upon to counsel on and resolve ethical dilemmas. Successful practitioners in top management are well schooled in ethics, while those excluded from strategic decision making report little or no ethics education (Bowen, 2008).

Since 2006, the field of communication has become significantly more complicated, and the rise of new technologies and the popularity of social media, along with controversies over "fake news" and "alternative facts," transparency in business and government and other issues, have initiated many ethical debates. Communication practitioners today face new dilemmas in the workplace, in their engagement with publics, and in their use of the ever-evolving "new" technologies.

Recent research sheds some light on the way current practices in public relations education are preparing (or not preparing) students to succeed as practitioners. To investigate the differences between programs that offer public relations ethics as a course versus those that offer ethics content throughout the curriculum, Neill (2017) conducted a survey among public relations educators. The results suggested that while incorporating ethics into all courses has some advantages, a single course provides much broader coverage of ethics topics that impact today's public relations practitioner.

Another study which used an online survey and telephone interviews of U.S. educators by Silverman, Gower, and Nekmat (2014) examined the extent to which ethics is included in public relations curricula in the U.S. Overall, educators perceived ethics instruction to be very important for public relations students, but few programs at that time required an ethics course or even recommended one as an elective. The preferred method of ethics instruction delivery was to embed it into each course in the public relations curriculum. Respondents reported that the most effective methods for teaching ethics were case studies, simulations, and small group discussions, while the least effective were Socratic dialogues, research papers, and lectures. The most helpful materials were current events, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Code of Ethics, and PRSA online ethics resources. Class discussions, reflexive/position papers, and student presentations were identified as the most effective forms of assessment.

Examining ethics education in an international context, Austin and Toth (2011) assessed public relations curricula in 39 countries, not including the United States. They found that ethics is not taught in most countries as an independent course, but rather is integrated throughout the curriculum. Comparing the approaches of Western European and U.S. educators, Bowen & Erzikova (2013) found that U.S. educators focus more on ethics within

the professional practice of public relations, while European educators focus on moral judgment or autonomy and the need to educate practitioners to become ethical agents in the broader philosophical context. European educators viewed themselves as autonomous critics of public relations ethics, with an intellectual distance from the industry, while their U.S. counterparts, were more connected to the industry.

Recommendations

Chapter authors and CPRE recommend the following actions:

- **Public relations ethics should be added as a required course to the current recommended five-course curriculum.** The results shared here clearly point to ethics as critical to the success of all practitioners, with only writing and communication ranked by practitioners as higher in importance for entry-level practitioners. A course focused **only on public relations ethics** will allow programs to cover a greater number of topics and include important specialized topics in the curriculum. **CPRE supports this as one of the major recommendations of this report.**

Chapter authors also recommend:

- **Public relations curriculum should continue to incorporate ethics into all courses across the curriculum.** This is true for both US-based and international programs. This incorporation into all courses should not replace a required ethics course.

- **Ethics lessons and courses should incorporate moral philosophy, case studies, and simulations to be the most effective.** Coursework should cover ethics among a variety of topics such as conducting research, social media, and business partnerships, and incorporate analyses using rigorous philosophical approaches and critical thinking skills. Using classical ethical knowledge and applying it critically to modern public relations challenges will equip future practitioners to thrive in an environment of fake news, high levels of mistrust, management scandals, and public scrutiny of information sources.

- More current research on some key ethics-related topics should be considered. The most current research on the subject of how education in the topic of ethics affects the inclusion of public relations practitioners in strategic decision-making dates to 2008. The importance of this subject is such that a new study would make an important contribution to the profession.

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> **"Given the changes in today's media and communications environment, growing skepticism of public information has led to declining public trust in institutions, businesses, governments and more."**

Theory:
The Ever-Evolving Foundation for Why We Do What We Do

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Overview

Executing effective public relations starts with knowing and understanding the public relations theory that helps define the practice. The 2016 Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) Omnibus Survey explores the importance of public relations theory. While there is agreement between practitioners and educators that it is important for entry-level practitioners to understand public relations theory, there is some disagreement surrounding whether those entry-level practitioners are currently entering the workforce prepared with theory knowledge.

The public relations body of knowledge comprises a wide variety of theories and frameworks. The reason for this wide variety can be linked to the lack of an agreed-upon definition of public relations. For example, some definitions, such as Grunig and Hunt's (1984), lead theorists to build upon public relations as a management function in organizations, and others such as Cutlip and Center's (2006) led theorists to concentrate on "relationships" as the focal point of public relations.

It is important to acknowledge that theories of public relations will change over time as they are tested and challenged. Current and future practitioners should view theories as temporary roadmaps, since public relations theory will continue to develop and evolve.

Introduction

This chapter on public relations theory marks the first time that CPRE has chosen to include central *public relations theory* in its report on undergraduate public relations education. Previous Commission reports had deemed that public relations theory was "essential knowledge" but included theory only as an add-on to "origins, principles, and professional practices" of public relations ("A Port of Entry," 1999, p. 21; "The Professional Bond," 2006, p. 45). With this current report, the CPRE recognizes and emphasizes that public relations has a body of theory that should inform undergraduate students preparing for public relations careers. This is an important hallmark, also, for how much the public relations field has advanced, and how those in the field now accept that the effective practice of public relations starts with understanding the theoretical framework of the profession.

Moncur (2006) took the position that "PR theory can provide practitioners with a language and conceptual framework by means of which they can both appraise and evaluate their own activities and present their disciplines to organizational leaders within the context of wider management strategies" (p. 95). Geddes (2014) blogged that in his professional practice, speaking engagements, training seminars, and teaching, "... we always begin with a look at communication theory and

models of communication." Welch blogged that "theories help communicators by providing them with the tools they can use to analyze problems and generate ideas" (2016). Wehmeier (2009) found that practitioners wanted more fundamental research, i.e., more middle-range and general theories rather than more practice of application-oriented directives (p. 273).

What is less clear is what a theory of public relations is. Sisco, Collins, and Zoch (2011) reported in their content analysis of public relations journals, that they could not just accept authors' claims about public relations theory because the authors were using models to refer to theories and vice versa. Sisco et. al. (2011) also found that "authors using the same term were in fact discussing two different theoretical approaches" (p. 149) and that: "Simply calling something a theory or a theoretical concept or a model or a framework does not make it so" (p. 149).

Public Relations Theory

Theory starts with abstract ideas taken from things imagined or observed; public relations practitioners and scholars use words to attempt to capture theoretical meaning. J. Grunig (2013) called the first stage of developing theory the "semantic structures," ideas in the mind of researchers. He stated that scholars construct, through language, theories to make sense of reality. "Good theory helps make sense of reality, either positive or explanatory theory or normative theory that helps improve reality; to understand how public relations is practiced, to improve its practice—for the organization, for publics, and for society" (p. 2).

Theories help predict, and theories help explore and find new understandings. Nastasia and Rakow (2010) used the analogy of map reading versus map-making to describe two kinds of theory. Map reading gets at one meaning of theory by using deductive and inductive reasoning to build explanations of why things are as they are. Evidence is gathered to test whether theoretical explanations hold in specific circumstances. A map-reading theory becomes more useful when it can explain ever-widening contexts through application of the theory to multiple cases. For example, public relations experts point to the effectiveness of prioritizing relationship building with specific groups or publics rather than the general public. Relationship management theory suggests

that organizations will be more effective if they choose to use their finite resources on those groups most relevant to an organization's goals. Researchers have developed this theory by suggesting different ways of prioritizing publics. This includes identifying publics by each specific situation or problem as well as segmenting them by demographics (Kim, Ni, & Sha, 2008.)

Theory as map-making addresses our need to "make sense" of emergent human activities, such as the impact of the Internet and its social media platforms on the practice of public relations. Practitioners and educators work hard to construct a map that suggests how to use social media strategically and how to measure the impact of social media. Mapmaking suggests that theory provides an exploration for new meanings or interpretations, a call for the use of imaginative power to find and interpret new understandings (2010). Mapmaking acknowledges that theories are dynamic and ever-changing explanations. Theories are tested, modified, and constantly challenged over time, both in the academy and in the practice.

2016 Omnibus Survey Findings

Both public relations practitioners and educators generally agreed that entry-level practitioners need grounding in public relations theory (see Table 1.1). However, there was a disconnect in how educators and practitioners felt about the actual preparedness of entry-level new hires in regard to their level of understanding of public relations theory. More than 300 educators felt their undergraduate programs delivered in regard to students understanding public relations theory (see Table 1.2). Yet, nearly 500 practitioners responded that they less often found an understanding of public relations theory in entry-level new hires (see Table 1.3). All results of the public relations theory questions on the 2016 Omnibus Survey were in the average to slightly above range.

Table 1	Educators	Practitioners
Understanding public relations theory is a desirable outcome for preparing entry-level public relations positions	**M=3.6**	**M=3.4**

*The mean response was a 5-point scale, with 5 representing "most desirable outcome."

Table 1.2	Educators
Our undergraduate program delivered on students understanding public relations theory	**M=3.8**

*The mean response was a 5-point scale, with 5 representing the most agreement.

Table 1.3	Practitioners
There is less often an understanding of public relations theory in entry-level new hires.	**M=3.0**

*The mean response was a 5-point scale, with 5 representing the most agreement.

"Theories help predict, and theories help explore and find new understandings."

Examining Working Definitions and Theories of Public Relations

A discussion of public relations theory starts with an examination of working definitions of public relations and the concepts embedded in theories that are themselves subsumed by the definitions. Public relations has no agreed-upon definition. This lack has led to different choices of theory development by researchers and practitioners. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 6) defined public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics." This definition has led theorists to build explanations about the role of public relations as a management function in organizations.

Cutlip and Center and Broom, on the other hand, define public relations as "a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006, p. 6). This definition has led to theory building that emphasizes how "relationships" are a focal concept of the practice of public relations. Relationships can be measured to assess the effectiveness of public relations practice.

In contrast to Grunig and Hunt (1984) and the Cutlip and Center (2006) text, Heath (2006) conceptualized the organization function of public relations as a communicative or symbolic activity that parallels interpersonal communication among individuals. Heath argued, "entities (corporate and individual) competing to co-create shared social meaning, negotiate relationships, influence and yield to influence, create and resolve conflict, etc. (p. 99). Heath's definition of public relations is informed by rhetorical theory and criticism, and asserts that rhetorical processes applicable to interpersonal communication explain public relations' role in the creation and resolution of conflicts between organizations and publics, as well as understand and resolve societal issues.

One of the most frequently cited theories of public relations is the Excellence theory. As stated by J. E. Grunig,

Excellence theory is a theory, which answers two research questions: (1) How does public relations contribute value to organizations, publics, and society? (2) What characteristics of a public relations function, the organization itself, and the environment are most likely to increase this value? The Excellence theory answers the first question (or explains it) by specifying that public relations adds value through establishing and cultivating relationships with publics (which constitute society). It answers the second question by specifying that public relations adds the most value when it is strategic, managerial, symmetrical, diverse, integrated, ethical, global, separate from marketing and has communication programs that are evaluated and managed strategically (2017).

Scholars and practitioners contribute to different streams of theory building at different times and in different ways. They present their work in textbooks, conference papers, published research articles, trade publication articles, blogs, and Facebook debates at different times to different audiences. Academic researchers are likely to follow trends in what they study, attracted to the current issues and problems expressed in the practice. Although some scholars work on one program of research over long periods of time, others pursue different research problems and use different theories over time.

Meadows and Meadows (2014) sought to summarize the lines of public relations theory development over the past four decades, by tracking of randomly selected research articles appearing in the *Journal of Public Relations Research* and *Public Relations Review* between 1975 and 2013. They found 87 theories and models that were used at least once. The most frequently applied theories were agenda setting (n=15), the situational theory of publics (n=12), the critical theory/critical discourse analysis (n=11) and framing theory (n=10). However, frequency of referencing a theory or research tradition does not provide a clear path for selecting theories of public relations for educators to teach undergraduates.

Practitioners, teachers, and students need a coherent categorization scheme that situates various theories of

public relations according to key attributes. A key assumption of such a scheme is that public relations is practiced in every organization, even if informally. This assumption seems obvious. However, reading literature about theory from multiple paradigms with conflicting definitions of key concepts is confusing. One can get lost in the myriad of topics discussed. One might be persuaded that the theories most frequently discussed are the theories that best define public relations.

J. E. Grunig (2008) suggested a four-level framework that divides theory by the domain that the theory seeks to explain. The framework suggests separating theoretical examinations by program level, functional level, organizational level, and societal level.

The program (or operational) level of theory focuses on the communication programs of the public relations department or unit that seeks to influence cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors of publics. Theories within this level would include theories of communication, technology, media relations (including agenda setting and framing), and crisis communication. Theories of communication practices and processes are most evident in scholarship at the program level of theory. Lines of research on programmatic communication include mass communication, interpersonal communication, persuasion and social influence, conflict resolution and negotiation, communication effects, listening, and rhetoric.

The functional or departmental level of public relations theory seeks to explain and predict the relationship between the public relations department and other organizational functions that involve communication responsibilities. These include marketing, advertising, and human resources. Theories about the function of the public relations unit in organizations also include the proposition that public relations manages organization-public relationships through strategic communication by prioritizing many publics and programs simultaneously to achieve organizational goals.

The organizational level of public relations theory includes those theories of public relations that explain and predict how organizations interact through their own behaviors and communication with their environments. Organizational action and communication may seek to adapt or seek to control issues, problems,

and opportunities important to the organization. Arguably, organizations have communication obligations, such as the need for transparency with financial and nonfinancial information or to build tangible and intangible assets such as reputation and brand. At this level, public relations theory may seek to explain and predict how investment in public relations can deliver these communication obligations and provides a return on investment to the organization. At the organizational level, public relations theory explores legal and ethical environments in which organizations operate. Theory at the organizational level includes addressing issues of internal and external cultures, diversity and inclusion. It includes the theorizing on the roles played by public relations practitioners (Dozier & Broom, 2006).

Theories at the societal level of analysis address how—and in what ways—public relations makes contributions to organizations' social and ethical responsibilities to society. Modernist theories have addressed social responsibility and the triple bottom-line, transparency, and ethics. Rhetorical theory examines organizational speech in the wrangle of the marketplace of ideas (Heath, 2009, p. 23). Critical theory argues against the modernists' and rhetorical theories by asserting ideological underpinnings of public relations practice. Such postmodern scholarship focuses on underlying assumptions about gender, democracy, and globalization. Postmodern "theories" of public relations reject normative theory for ideological reasons, favor idiographic explanations instead, and treat evidence in the classical sense as suspect. Instead of constructing and testing theory, postmodern scholars in public relations pay attention to paradox, ambiguity, uncertainty, and difference.

An exhaustive list of public relations theories is beyond the scope of this short chapter. Educators will find several recommended lists of specific theories in textbooks and publications, but there is not complete consistency. See Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzura and Jones (2003) for an analysis of theory development in public relations academic journals. Welch (2016) listed 28 theories that public relations educators should consider including in their teaching. Her groupings included communication theory and rhetoric; social scientific communication theory; communication process theory; and other theories from psychology such as attitude change models, cognitive consistency

theory, and attribution theory. In addition, Welsh recommended the following public relations theories: (1) situational theory, (2) the four models of public relations, (3) Excellence theory, (4) domino model of public relations effects, (5) co-orientation model, and (6) public relations role theory. Penrose (2015) divided theories relevant to the practice into journalism-oriented theories and public relations-oriented foundational concepts. His list included the four models of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984); audience analysis; channel selections; persuasion theories; information processing; elaboration likelihood model; heuristic systematic model; affect; medium theory; functional theory; and inoculation theory.

Recommendations

Based on results from the 2016 Omnibus Survey, and current trends surrounding public relations theory, the chapter authors recommend the following.

- **Educators should teach undergraduate public relations majors about the importance of theory for public relations practice.** Students should prepare for entry into public relations by regarding theories of public relations as temporary roadmaps. The theoretical roadmaps will continue to evolve over their professional careers. Thus, novice practitioners will continue to learn and apply old and new public relations theory to their daily practices.

- **Academic and practitioner journals should commit to keep practitioners informed of the latest theoretical developments**. In particular, trade journals should play a prominent role in translating academic theories into language that practitioners can understand and act upon.

- **Educators should contextualize the principles and practices of public relations in organizational settings.** It is key to show students how theory can help make sense of various entry-level skills, such as writing. Good writing is not only well written but also driven by the strategic thinking at the functional, organizational, and societal levels of public relations theory.

- **Educators must continue to draw on theories of business and management to emphasize the business side of public relations (see Ragas and Culp, 2014).** These theories include understanding of the environment in which organizations operate; that is, the economic, political, and social issues and trends that will influence how organizations seek to achieve their missions and goals.

- **The chapter authors and CPRE also recommend that educators, as well as current and future practitioners, must regard their theoretical roadmap as temporary.** Public relations as a discipline has generated a wide range of public relations theories that should inform and direct practice. The roadmap learned as an undergraduate in an introductory public relations principles course is a good start, but public relations theory remains a work in progress.

"The roadmap learned as an undergraduate in an introductory public relations principles course is a good start, but public relations theory remains a work in progress."

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Research:
The Foundation of Effective, Contemporary Public Relations Practice

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Overview

Research is unquestionably important to the practice of public relations, and the ability to conduct research and interpret the results is an essential skill for the entry-level practitioner. In the 2006 Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) Report "The Professional Bond," one of the five courses recommended as a requirement was research methods. Results from the 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey showed that almost all educators (90%) report that research methods is a required course in the curriculum.

However, 2016 Omnibus Survey results also showed that even though most public relations students are being exposed to research methods in the curriculum, practitioners are not satisfied with the extent of new hires' research skills. This suggests students would benefit from a more applied, public relations–centric research course that encourages critical thinking and data analysis. It is recommended that public relations curricula should include instruction on the nature and purpose of research, the types and methods of research, and the analysis of research.

Introduction

As far back as 1951, Frank Lang wrote that it is "the research-minded executive of today who understands the strength and limitations of [social science research] who will become the true public relations executive of tomorrow" (p. 64).

Lang was right; the practice has moved beyond the reliance on hunches and assumptions of old. Today, research is the cornerstone of the profession, impacting each step in the PR process. As Mark Weiner, CEO of PRIME Research Americas, (2015) noted in 2015:

. . . research is used "to discover and map the communications landscape; to set program objectives which are reasonable, meaningful and measurable; to develop pre-tested strategies and drive tactics to ensure compelling and credible campaigns; and to assess program performance throughout the process so that PR performance delivers continual improvement." In short, research is "the strategic foundation of modern public relations management," allowing us "to identify issues and engage in problem solving, to prevent and manage crises, to make organizations responsive and responsible to their publics, to create better organizational policy, and to build and maintain long-term relationships with publics" (Bowen, Rawlins, & Martin, 2010, p. 78).

Data from the 2016 Omnibus Survey used in this report strongly supports the need for teaching research in the public relations curriculum. This chapter provides context for the findings from the study and shares recommendations for improving research skills among entry-level practitioners.

2016 Omnibus Survey Findings

The 2016 Omnibus Survey included items specific to research that were designed to measure the perceptions of educators and practitioners regarding the research skills entry-level practitioners need and whether they actually have those skills. It also explored to what extent research methods are taught in the PR curricula.

With respect to the public relations curriculum, educators were asked whether research methods—one of the five courses "The Professional Bond" recommended as a requirement—is taught in their program, and if so, if it is a required course and public relations-specific. They were also asked the name of the research methods course in their program. Practitioners were asked whether research methods should be a required course for an undergraduate degree in public relations. And both practitioners and educators were asked to indicate whether the five courses required by the 2006 Report were still essential.

To assess the importance of data analytics, and measurement and evaluation for entry-level positions, the respondents were asked on a scale from 1 (not essential) to 5 (essential) to indicate how essential they believe those skills are for a complete undergraduate education.

An industry-educator summit held by CPRE in 2015 addressed similar questions to those posed by the 2016 Omnibus Survey, and the results of that summit were also reviewed for this chapter, as was the Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles, a set of voluntary principles developed by public relations practitioners in 33 countries.

Analysis of Results

At the 2015 CPRE Industry-Educator Summit, practitioners and educators agreed that being able to conduct research and analyze the data are essential skills required of entry-level practitioners. Yet, both groups observed that new hires did not have these skills at the desired level. The results of the 2016 Omnibus Survey used in this report echo those findings but provide greater nuance regarding the similarities and differences in perception between the two groups.

Industry members and educators believe research and analytics skills are desirable for entry-level positions (see Table 1.1). However, support is not as strong among educators and practitioners when it comes to data analytics. The views of the two groups were more similar when asked about measurement and evaluation, which both saw as desirable.

"In short, research is the strategic foundation of modern public relations management."

Table 1.1

Desirability of KSAs for Entry-Level Positions	Educators	Practitioners
	Mean	Mean
Research and analytics skills	4.30	4.07
Data analytics	4.15	3.93
Measurement and evaluation	4.57	4.41

*Mean was measured on a 5-point Likert scale

When asked what they believe are the top five most-desired KSAs for entry-level positions, a third (34%) of the 238 educators who answered the question included some form of research (e.g., research, measurement, data analytics, evaluation, social media measurement) in their top five. Practitioners were less inclined (27.6%) to cite research as a desired KSA. It should be noted, however, that this question came after the respondents had already been asked about how desirable research and analytics are as a skill. The responses to the question should not be taken as an indication that research is not important, especially considering answers to the question of whether a research-methods course should be taught.

Practitioners overwhelmingly (94.7%) believe that a research-methods course should be required in the public relations curriculum. Among the educators, 95% say they teach research methods in the curriculum, and of those, 90% say the course is required. Less than half (46.8%) of the research courses are public relations-specific, which may help explain the gap in the perception of how well students are acquiring research skills. Although research courses are routinely offered, educators rated their programs' ability to actually teach so that students have research and analytics skills at a "B" level, with a 3.78 mean. Even more concerning, practitioners rated the extent to which entry-level hires actually have research skills even lower, with a 2.69 mean, suggesting the courses are not as effective as they could be.

Survey results indicate that research should be a required course in the public relations curriculum and that effective outcome measurement and evaluation and data analytics should be included. It is unclear, however, whether and to what extent those topics are included in the research courses currently offered by public relations programs. Based solely on reviewing the course titles listed on the Surveys, it appears that nearly a third of the research courses are focused on communication generally (30.2%), with titles such as Research Methods in Communication and Communication Research. Public relations–specific courses are the second most frequent (26%) (i.e., Public Relations Research; Public Relations Research, Measurement & Evaluation), followed by research methods generally (25%) (i.e., Research Methods in Social Science; Qualitative & Quantitative Research). An additional 13.5% of the courses take a clearly "applied" approach, with titles such as Market Research & Analysis and Audience Insight & Analysis.

Progress Since 2006 Report

Although the 2006 report did not make recommendations regarding the offering of specific courses in addition to the minimum five courses that were recommended, the 2006 CPRE report highlighted research-related content that should be covered in the curriculum which included the following research components:
- quantitative and qualitative research design;
- processes and techniques, such as public opinion polling and survey research;
- experiential 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; and
- media and clipping analysis and historical research.

After the release of the 2006 report, PRSA updated its requirements for PRSSA Chapter charters to comply with CPRE's recommendations. PRSSA chapters may only be established and maintained at colleges and universities that offer courses in five subject areas, one of which is public relations research. A comparative analysis of public relations curricula among 234 colleges and universities with a PRSSA chapter revealed that almost three-quarters of the programs (73.5%) offered a communication (53.0%) or public relations (20.5%) research course (Auger & Cho, 2016).

Now More Than Ever: The Need for Research Is Acknowledged Throughout the Industry and the Globe

In developing a global body of knowledge, the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management has identified research, planning, implementation, and evaluation as essential knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for entry-level practitioners, which includes content including measurement and evaluation tied to objectives and outcomes, research methods and concepts, and stakeholder analysis (Manley & Valin, 2017). Skills and abilities deemed necessary to entry-level success include "the ability to apply theoretical and applied primary and secondary research, formal and informal, qualitative and quantitative methods"; "ability to conduct environmental scanning and stakeholder analysis"; "ability to understand and interpret data and results"; and "ability to use results of research, identify trends and link to communication objectives, set measurement targets, outcomes and other metrics" (Manley & Valin, 2017, p. 63).

Clearly, research continues to be an important consideration for public relations practitioners and is

increasingly recognized as such. What has changed in this area since the last report, however, is the growing importance of analyzing data from digital sources, including "Big Data," and the need to generate actionable insights from the data. As Philip B. Stark, professor and chair of statistics at the University of California, Berkeley, has said about Big Data, "The type of data (structured, text, etc.) isn't the point at all. The way of thinking matters." The importance of digitally sourced data to the practice of public relations, is not the quantity of information or the ease with which it may be obtained but rather the actionable insights that can be derived from that data. Public relations practitioners must be able to make sense of the information for their clients.

Recommendations

Public relations research and measurement remain crucial components of the practice and as such, must be core skills taught in the public relations undergraduate curriculum. But there is some question whether students are acquiring those skills to the extent they should. That gap would not appear to be the result of a lack of exposure to research. The educators who responded to the 2016 Omnibus Survey overwhelmingly indicate that a research course is offered and usually required. Thus, either the courses are not providing students with the necessary skills to conduct research and analyze data for the public relations practice, or the students are not translating those skills to the practice. A better understanding of this situation is needed in order to address the perceived gap.

In addition, the chapter authors agree with the Barcelona Declaration of Principles (2010) regarding the importance of goal setting and measurement in public relations and recommend that "[m]easurement should take a holistic approach, including representative traditional and social media; changes in awareness among key stakeholders, comprehension, attitude, and behavior as applicable; and effect on business results" (p. 3).

Based on the foregoing, the chapter authors recommend:

- **That further research be conducted** into why students are not acquiring the skills they need and the best practices for teaching research and measurement in the undergraduate curriculum.

- That the following topics be addressed in the public relations curriculum:

    o The Barcelona Declaration of Principles regarding goal setting and measurement.

    o Nature of Research. Students should understand what is meant by "research" and why it is important in public relations. Research should be defined broadly and not confused with methodology. As noted cultural anthropologist and writer, Zora Neale Hurston (1942), once wrote, "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose" (p. 143).

    o Purpose of Research. Students should understand the various purposes of research in the public relations process and that it is continuous. They should understand the difference between outputs (what they create) and outcomes (what quantifiable changes resulted from the communication) and why measuring outcomes, rather than outputs, is recommended (Barcelona Principles, 2015).

    o Types of Research. Students should understand the different types of research, such as informal vs. formal and qualitative vs. quantitative, and that all are valid contributors to insights.

    o Methods of Research. Students should be introduced to a variety of research methods including: surveys, focus groups, interviews, case studies, content analysis, issues tracking, and environmental monitoring, as well as research tools such as Google Analytics. Regardless of method, however, the focus should be on the application of research in

the practice and emphasis placed on a multi-methodological approach. Measurement and evaluation, for example, require both quantitative and qualitative methods (Barcelona Principles, 2015).

    o Analysis of Research. The ability to conduct research is necessary, of course, but so is the ability to analyze and make sense of the results of that research. Students need a basic understanding of statistics and how to use statistics to analyze the data. But they also must be able to go beyond the numbers and identify the implications of those numbers to produce actionable insights for the client. Converting data to insights requires critical thinking, applied statistical skills, and subject-matter expertise.

"The ability to conduct research is necessary, of course, but so is the ability to analyze and make sense of the results of that research."

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Technology:
Harnessing the Tools For Public Relations Now and Future State

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Overview

Technology does not sit still, and consequently, neither can public relations practitioners and educators. Both groups have to continue to learn about communication tools and platforms, messaging capabilities on different channels, how audiences are using media, and how to analyze data available. Practitioners have to be able to use these tools in a way audiences understand and must be able to explain their use to clients. This knowledge and these abilities come from hands-on practice; however, educators must continually train students to look at the use of these tools at a higher level—at the strategic level, not just as tacticians.

According to the 2016 Commission on Public Relations (CPRE) Omnibus Survey findings (Omnibus Survey), educators reported that current required courses linked to technology were graphic design and social media, followed by courses that involve video production, digital media, and visual communication. Educators were also asked what courses should become required for public relations programs, and many of the responses listed technology-based topics such as social media, analytics, web coding, and graphic design. Practitioners answered similarly, naming potential required courses such as social media, analytics, digital communication/digital media, and design.

Based on these findings and the current trends of communication technology, it is recommended that in addition to incorporating technology into current coursework, public relations programs should begin to develop and require additional technology-based courses. However, it is still equally important that even non-technology-based courses include activities connecting the concepts of the class to current trends in technology. The continued incorporation of technology into curriculum will help best equip students with the needed knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to best serve the practice of public relations.

Introduction

Technology used for communication covers a vast range, including devices, platforms, and methods. According to the digital media agency WeAreSocial (2017), global social media users have grown to 482 million people (up by 21% from 2015) with Facebook being the dominant global social media platform. Although the social platforms, access, and devices change continuously, public relations practitioners need to understand many skills related to core technologies, such as design, multimedia creation including audio and video production, strategic thinking, storytelling, and analyzing data. Specifically, public relations practitioners need to know how to create as well as how to evaluate creative work, and they need to be able to make an argument for when to use a particular channel. Before selecting communication channels and creative needs, it imperative that PR practitioners know about learning tendencies and how best to reach people. Every channel is used differently by individuals based on their personal learning styles and communication preferences. For example, Vakos (n.d.) noted that 65% of the population learns best through visuals, which points to the importance of including photos, infographics, and videos.

Content is being created and curated at a rapid pace, and those posts translate into potentially insight-filled data for the public relations practitioner. With more and more ways to monitor social media conversations and mobile and website usage, the amount of data available is astounding. Thus, PR practitioners need to have data literacy. They need not only to know how to find available data but also to be able to pull out valuable information from it in order to make smarter decisions.

The following chapter discusses these issues and other topics PR educators and practitioners see as essential curriculum content related to communication technology.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Technology-related KSAs mentioned in the survey included social media management, web and app development, graphic design, and audio/video production. Questions focused on the desirability of such technology-related items as engagement in campus student media, activity on social media, the creation of an online portfolio, and earned certifications. In addition, the 2016 Omnibus Survey asked about topics related to technology that should be present in university curricula from both the educators' and practitioners' points of view; the topic list included data analytics, social media, and other digital technologies. Finally, the survey inquired about educators' experiences and characteristics, including questions about the importance of holding certifications and whether they stay up to date with technology.

When educators were asked how desired the KSAs for social media management were, 21.8 percent responded they were highly desired. Educators saw social media management as a highly desired skill and felt their current educational programs met this need well. Practitioners who responded to the survey agreed, placing value in social media management skills at a similarly high rate. Practitioners said this skillset was found in entry-level new hires frequently (see Table 1).
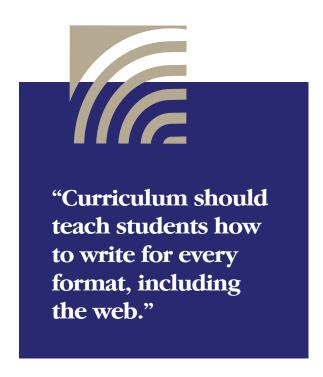
"**Curriculum should teach students how to write for every format, including the web.**"

Table 1:
Importance and Delivery Perceptions of Key Skills and Abilities Related to Technology

KSA Area	Desirability of KSAs[a]		How Efficiently KSAs Are Being Delivered to Students[b]	How Frequently KSAs Are Found in Entry Level New Hires[c]
	Educators	Practitioners	Educators	Practitioners
Research and Analytics	4.30	4.08	3.78	2.70
Social Media Management	4.50	4.34	3.67	3.79
Graphic Design	3.12	2.93	2.66	2.36
Audio/Video Production	3.08	2.86	2.65	2.22
Website Development	3.08	2.84	2.46	2.23
App Development	2.32	1.92	1.58	1.62

a: 1 = not desired, 5 = highly desired
b: 1 = doesn't deliver, 5 = strongly delivers
c: 1 = not found, 5 = always found

Graphic design KSAs were indicated as desired by educators at a lower rate than analytics skills and were desired slightly less by practitioners than educators expected (see Table 1). Educators who responded to the survey believed the delivery of graphic design KSAs were desirable, and public relations practitioners estimated that KSAs in graphic design were found in some new hires.

Audio and visual production KSAs were seen as desirable by educators, who believed their programs were somewhat delivering them (see Table 1). A/V production KSAs were indicated as desired by practitioners, though at a lower rate than educators expected, and were found rather infrequently.

Educators viewed web development as an important KSA for students to develop, while practitioners desired it a little less (see Table 1). Educators believed those skills in web development were being delivered and taught somewhat, and practitioners said they found those KSAs in web development at a similar low average.

According to the educators who responded to the survey, KSAs in app development were believed to be less desirable than other technology areas on the survey, and not many believed their programs delivered them (see Table 1). Practitioners rated app development low on desirability and reported they found these KSAs infrequently.

In addition to knowledge, skills, and abilities in particular areas, public relations practitioners were asked about the types of characteristics they desired in recently graduated new hires (see Table 2). Practitioners desired potential employees to be active on social media and reported finding that characteristic at an even higher rate than desired. Practitioners desired new hires to have been active in student media on their respective campuses, but they have found fewer students to have done so. Public relations practitioners also desired online portfolios and found them less often. Many companies offer technology-related certifications (e.g., Hootsuite, Adobe, Google, HubSpot, Meltwater), and the practitioners said those are desirable but not found as frequently as desired.

Table 2:
Importance and Delivery Perceptions of Characteristics Related to Technology

Characteristic	Desirability[a]	How Frequently Characteristics Are Found by Pros in Entry-Level New Hires[b]
Active on Social Media	3.87	4.36
Active in Student Media	3.71	2.81
Has an Online Portfolio	3.48	2.76
Up to Date with Professional Trends and Issues	4.09	2.78
Certified (Hootsuite, Google, etc.)	2.87	1.91

a: 1 = not desired, 5 = highly desired
b: 1 = not found, 5 = always found

Public relations practitioners were asked to list other skills or experience they wanted. Several of the suggestions were technology-related including:

- "acumen to learn new things and keep up with industry trends";
- "coding as a skill; CMS and CRM experience; web design—all highly desired and never found";
- "an online or hardcopy portfolio that demonstrates design ability, creativity, etc. is a bonus"; and
- "published articles, blog, WRITING experience" and experience with "WordPress, Survey Monkey, MailChimp, Wires, ProfNet, etc."

Current Course Requirements
Public relations educators were asked about current course requirements. Although the requirements varied greatly by course name, the most commonly mentioned courses related to technology involved graphic design and social media, followed by courses involving video production and more general titles like digital media and visual communication.

Other Courses That Should Be Required
Educators were asked to list additional courses they thought should be required for all public relations majors. Many educators who answered this question listed courses related to technology. The most commonly mentioned courses that educators said should be required included social media, graphic design, analytics, digital concepts, and coding/web production. Fifteen of the suggestions used the word "digital," from the general "digital skills class" to the more specific "content creation

for digital platforms." Some "digital" and "social media" references focused on literacy while others referenced strategy. Several less frequent responses stood out from the others: one mentioning ethics and social media, and another mentioning mobile media specifically. Educators also mentioned digital/computer literacy.

Public relations practitioners were also given the chance to list additional courses they thought should be required for all public relations majors. The courses most frequently mentioned by the 471 public relations practitioners included social media, analytics, digital communication/digital media and design. Also mentioned were audio/video production and coding/web design. Other technology-related course suggestions that were not mentioned frequently but stood out on the list included photography, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, influencer marketing, SEO, online reputation management and technical writing.

Essential Topics
In addition to specific course titles, both educators and practitioners were asked to rank the level of importance of certain curriculum topics using a scale of 1 (not essential) to 5 (essential). Of the technology-related topics listed, social media are ranked the highest by both educators and practitioners. Following social media came measurement and evaluation, digital technologies, and data analytics. Visual communication came in fifth, with very close averages by educators and practitioners. Finally, technology communication scored the lowest of the technology topics, but still on the valued side of the scale.

Table 3:
Average Rating of the Essential Nature of Certain Technology-Related Curriculum Topics

Curriculum Topics	Educators	Practitioners
Social Media	4.60	4.46
Measurement and Evaluation	4.57	4.42
Digital Technologies	4.20	4.12
Data Analytics	4.15	3.93
Visual Communication	3.82	3.81
Technology Communication	3.32	3.05

1 = not essential, 5 = essential

Educator Qualifications

In a section of the survey, both educators and practitioners were asked about the credentials educators should have when teaching public relations at a four-year institution. Two parts of that section of the survey specified technology topics: certifications earned (e.g., Adobe, Hootsuite, Google) and whether the educator stayed up to date on technology. The responding public relations educators said the desirability of having earned certifications was near the midpoint between "not important" and "extremely important"; practitioners thought it was more desirable (see Table 4). Practitioners showed a great desire for educators to stay up to date with technology, which educators also rated high in importance.

In addition to inquiring about the importance level of earning certifications and staying current with technology, educators were also asked whether they had these two qualifications. The majority reported not holding any certifications (75.5%); however, 49% rated certifications as at least a 3 out of 5 on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important). With regard to staying current, a strong majority of educators said they were up to date with technology.

Table 4:
Educator Qualifications Related to Technology

Qualifications	Importance to Educators	Importance to Pros	Educators with Qualifications
Certified (Adobe, Hootsuite, Google, etc.)	2.38	3.00	24.5%
Stays up to date on Technology	4.40	4.63	90.9%

1 = not important, 5 = extremely important

Progress Since "The Professional Bond"

The 2006 Report "The Professional Bond" included interviews, and one of the biggest points of discussion related to technology was the "proliferation of media outlets" (p. 33). Since the 2006 Report was published, a mind-blowing number of new platforms and outlets for organizational information have been created, and they change daily; the list includes social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, and online and traditional news organizations. This makes life challenging for the public relations professor to keep up with industry standards.

Mobile
Mobile growth has been explosive. According to Pew's 2017 report, 95% of Americans have a mobile phone, and 77% of them own a smartphone. In addition to large ownership numbers, "a growing share of Americans now use smartphones as their primary means of online access at home" (para. 5). Organizations have found great success with mobile messaging and have discovered its power for real-time communication. As consumers adapt to a mobile-first world, students must learn to tailor messaging and strategies based on the ever-changing mobile information-consumption journey.

Channels
The use of the proper channel for each message was discussed in the 2006 Report and continues to be a valid concern; the difference between 2006 and now is the number of channels to consider. In the 2006 Report, websites and podcasting were referenced and the importance of monitoring blogs was indicated, but now we must monitor the vast and ever-changing social media landscape. Platforms for social listening have emerged (e.g., Hootsuite, Meltwater, Sysomos, Crimson Hexagon, Brandwatch, Microsoft, Social Studio, NetBase, Digimind Social, Business Wire/NUVI) to help practitioners manage this landscape, and educators have made efforts to prepare their students to use them (e.g., Kinsky, Freberg, Kim, Kushin & Ward, 2016; Stansberry, 2016). Some of these programs have had longevity within university public relations programs (e.g., Hootsuite), but there have been others that were unfortunately short lived due to changes within the company (e.g., Sysomos in the Classroom). Several companies have recently launched special programs for universities to use their tools in the classroom, including Microsoft Social Listening, HubSpot, and Meltwater.

Tools
As in the current study, in the 2006 survey both practitioners and educators were queried about essential course content, and answers pointed to the need to cover new tools and technologies. In 2006, those tools included email, podcasting, blogging, RSS feeds, interactive media kits, and "Internet conferencing" (p. 33). Today's list of tools is much longer; public relations practitioners are expected to create a variety of content to go along with written messages, from photos to video to graphics, and new programs and apps constantly emerge to help practitioners and educators with these tasks (e.g., Canva, Facebook Live, Adobe Creative Cloud).

"The Professional Bond" encouraged educators to present tools to students at both the undergraduate and graduate level and to discuss how they can benefit public relations practice, and educators have risen to the challenge (e.g., Noor Al-Deen, 2016). In 2006, CPRE encouraged the use of the latest tools in all public relations coursework and recognized that some tools might only be available via internships or through partnerships with industry because of their expense. If the actual tools were not available, CPRE encouraged educators to at least make students aware of their existence. Since that time, some companies have made great efforts to allow students free or discounted access to their tools (e.g., Hootsuite University, which became Hootsuite Academy; Sysomos in The Classroom, though brief; Cision; Microsoft).

In the 2006 Report, the pros and cons of communication technology tools were presented, and educators were encouraged to focus more on the overarching strategy of the use of these tools rather than the tools themselves; this recommendation of teaching strategy over tools continues, as tools change quickly. Because the tools and platforms that have emerged since 2006 have made publishing stories online rather easy, we have seen a proliferation of clickbait and fake news. The ease of posting content has eroded the public's trust in what they read online and in media, in general. Also, despite offering access to more viewpoints than ever before, technology has allowed the members of the public to curate their own newsfeeds with what they want to hear. According to Edelman (2017), "Technology has allowed the creation of media echo chambers, so that a person can reinforce, rather than debate, viewpoints" (p. 3).

Impact on Society

Going beyond specific tools, the 2006 technology chapter of "The Professional Bond" touched on the impact of communication technology trends on society, including privacy for individuals and organizations. Privacy issues continue to be debated today, especially with hacking threats becoming so frequent. The 2006 Report suggested educators challenge students to consider positive and negative impacts of technology use and the ethical use of technology. Many new ethical challenges involving social media have arisen, such as the proliferation of fake news, big data, cyberbullying, trolling, and large-scale hacking with release of documents to Wikileaks or other public sites. Each of these challenges is prominently discussed in the field and needs to be addressed and analyzed in public relations classes.

Concepts

Just as tools have changed, concepts have developed further. Peer-to-peer online environments prompt the question of how influence will work in the future.

The Internet of Things has been a topic of discussion since 1999, though it really became a common reference in 2013 (Emerging, 2013). Today, many people use Alexa, Google Home, or Apple Home Pod (released in 2017) to give verbal commands to control systems within their homes or to ask questions for quick information. Searches are conducted more and more frequently by voice command.

Virtual reality, mixed reality, and augmented reality are on a steep growth trajectory now because of the availability and lower cost of 360-degree cameras and headsets, arising out of *The New York Times* sharing Google Cardboard with its subscribers in December 2015. Platforms like Facebook provide support for panoramic and 360-degree photos, allowing consumers to engage with them without limiting the user experience. These platforms, devices, and software allow for immersive storytelling for brands.

As tools for reaching specific audiences improve, customers are becoming more and more used to highly personal, highly targeted advertising. Public relations must follow suit by activating small subsets, or micro-audiences, of one's overall audience and creating content that members of each audience will want to share on an organization's behalf. Sometimes this sharing is done privately via dark social when users find content of interest and share it with a third party by using untrackable methods such as email or text.

Additionally, social media care is a major concern for organizations online and needs to be taught. Public relations educators need to train students to demonstrate good customer service—how to have human-to-human interaction even when it comes via technology. So much of a brand's reputation is built online—from the brand voice shared via tweets and Facebook posts and replies to comments to the writing on a brand's website. If public relations practitioners understand what goes into brand development and are able to "live the brand," they can do better at protecting the brand.

Another area of growth since the 2006 Report is easy accessibility to tools. Although visual communication was referenced in the earlier report, the access to tools has exploded with Adobe Creative Cloud and with free, user-friendly, online design programs like Canva. In addition to new tools available at lower costs, today's social platforms have updated their mobile apps to feature users' cameras and added filter options to further encourage multimedia sharing.

The types of data used by practitioners have also expanded, and now include watching the number of comments, subscribers, retweets, favorites, likes, shares, and reactions as well as traditional web and email analytics. This gives practitioners better data literacy, i.e., the ability to extract valuable information from all of the data available and to deduct meaning from it in order to make wise decisions.

Live tweeting and live streaming (via Twitter's Periscope, YouTube Live, Facebook Live, and Instagram Live) have also revolutionized the way organizations and their publics can communicate with each other in real time. Hashtags for brands and special campaigns have become expected. Some have led to hijacking by detractors, which has led to a new kind of crisis (e.g., Lubin, 2012) referred to as *brandjacking*. Online crises were being monitored in 2006, but only on blogs. With the Security and Exchange Commission's approval of social media platforms as news sharing tools, public company stock prices can be affected by social media updates. The world of social media has expanded the required landscapes public relations practitioners must now watch.

While privacy issues were a concern in 2006, that concern has both grown and waned. With the existence of so much data online (aka "big data"), more of the details of people's lives are available to strangers and to corporations. The concern has waned for younger generations who have grown up in a digital world and who have never regarded privacy in the same way their parents did.

Lastly, instead of just talking about media relations, we have shifted to investing research and effort into *influencer* relations because of the growth in communities surrounding online personalities and the ability for nontraditional celebrities to arise from the citizenry via

views and subscribers on YouTube, and followers on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Nielsen's 2015 Trust in Advertising study supports this shift, noting that people trust recommendations and content shares from "people I know" at a rate of 83%. These have been dramatic changes in the past 10 years.

Recommendations

There is a need for practitioners to understand both the art and science of communication. As mentioned earlier, learning how to analyze data is an important skill for today's public relations practitioners. To help development the necessary skills in future practitioners, this chapter's authors recommend that public relations programs should work to implement the following recommendations:

- **Ensure students understand quantitative analysis.** Quantitative analysis needs to be taught at the undergraduate level and should offer students both a discussion of what it is as well as hands-on opportunities to work with business data.

- **Curriculum should teach students how to write for every format, including the web.** Students must learn to merge good writing with good technology use. They should learn how to use Google Trends as they type a document in Microsoft Word, to search what they write, and to use hyperlinks to save on word count and to demonstrate intellectual honesty. Students should learn how to write in a way to be discoverable on every device. For example, Google currently has a 65-character limit on what it shows in search results, and students need to know how to make the most of those characters. Students should learn about native advertising, how to use Google Alerts and Ad Words, and how to write good blogs with links and keywords. Students must have hands-on opportunities with these areas, not just discussion of them.

- **As much as possible, technology tools should be incorporated into courses.** There are a number of companies offering educational partnerships for cheaper or free access to their services (e.g., Hootsuite, Microsoft, HubSpot, Cision, Meltwater).

- **Non-technology-based courses should still include activities that connect the concepts of the class to current trends.** For example, a public relations writing course should include long form and short firm writing such as white papers, effective blog posts, hashtags, tweets, and email subject lines. A public relations campaigns course should include digital elements as appropriate to the client. A cases course should include social media campaigns and crises. A research class should examine data available through social listening software and offer students the chance to see the screens that administrators see behind a brand's Facebook page, for example.

- **Require trainings for educators to stay up to date on new technologies.** There are many free training programs online. Certifications (e.g., Adobe, Google, Hootsuite, Meltwater, HubSpot) can benefit educators' credibility. Educators can also continue to learn and to provide their students with the latest trends by leveraging the technology available to them in their classrooms, using Skype or Google Hangouts to bring in speakers from around the world who are currently in the field and using technology. Having guest speakers share the latest trends via video conferencing tools offers an opportunity to peek into the current demands on practitioners. Educators can also investigate programs like those with The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, which allow educators to embed with professional communicators during part of the summer at the corporate and agency level. During this program, educators have the opportunity to learn current trends and practices related to the industry but also contribute by working on a project for their host. This program enhances the growing need to bridge the practice within industry and public relations education.

> **"Content is being created and curated at a rapid pace, and those posts translate into potentially insight-filled data for the public relations practitioner."**

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Academic Structure and Governance:
Where Does Public Relations Fit in Today's Colleges and Universities?

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Overview

Public relations undergraduate courses and programs are found in a variety of departments, schools, and colleges of universities. While the earliest undergraduate majors were located in schools of journalism, since the 1970s the extremely rapid growth of majors developed in departments of communication studies and a few business programs. These majors were sometimes called tracks, sequences, or concentrations because they were developed within a major, such as communication. Compared to traditional majors such as biology, there is much less consistency in terms of how and where public relations courses are taught.

Public relations educators have long sought public relations undergraduate education to be taught in its own department so that they would be better able to lead the decisions on resources and curriculum that come with departmental status. University academic structures in place are extremely difficult to change after their majors are established, so that public relations undergraduate education has become the add-on rather than the primary mission of departments. Established structures, such as departments, schools, and colleges within universities have been and are unlikely to relinquish their public relations undergraduate

offerings because they attract sizable numbers of students, thus adding to the department's bottom line.

While location is important to undergraduate education, of equal influence on the quality of public relations undergraduate studies is the Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE), because it can provide a national set of standards to programs that may otherwise have limited access to information about what students should learn in order to be successful in the marketplace. CPRE can be and has been a counter to decisions made by departments and schools that have little knowledge about the public relations field and its evolving practices.

It is important to keep monitoring the subject of where undergraduate public relations courses are taught within universities of undergraduate public relations studies, because this documentation will demonstrate the continuing critical need for CPRE and other organizations to provide standards to help these programs offer the best curriculum and necessary resources for students to successfully prepare to enter the profession of public relations.

Introduction

Public relations programs have continued to grow in numbers of degrees offered and numbers of students in virtually all types of academic institutions, as discussed in Chapter 4, Curriculum. The number of students majoring in or studying public relations majors varies significantly from campus to campus, from a few to hundreds. The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) lists more than 340 United States colleges and universities that offer public relations undergraduate programs that meet requirements to have a PRSSA chapter. My College Options Resource Center (2017) lists 1,273 universities with communications/public relations majors.

The variety of public relations courses and related requirements of these 1,273 schools vary a great deal. While some universities offer majors, concentrations, or specific sequences in public relations with multiple required classes with distinct prerequisites, others may only offer a class or two as electives. Programs are located in many different types of academic units, ranging from very related traditional areas of communication and journalism to diverse areas such as business or more general liberal arts. In this chapter we examine the administrative structures where public relations is taught, and related topics.

Many concerns reported in the 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond" are still mentioned by respondents to the 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey findings, which continue to show a wide variety of locations where public relations is housed in universities. While the locations included many important academic areas—namely communication, journalism, mass media, business, social sciences, and humanities—it is felt that the lack of consistency of where public relations is housed leads to confusion about public relations as a distinct profession. This may be exacerbated by the fact that there is inconsistency in nomenclature (public relations is taught under that name, as well as communications, strategic communications, marketing, etc.) and in structure (there are public relations departments, programs within other departments, sequences within other programs, etc.). The chapter authors observe that, among other efforts to address inconsistency, the term *public relations* should be listed

as a lead title for departments or colleges, especially if it is a program with a large number of majors, minors, and students who are majoring in related subjects and want to take one or more public relations courses.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Academic Unit Where Public Relations Courses Are Taught

When questioned about the name of the academic unit where public relations courses were taught, the most common area named was communications. The responses (categorized by the first descriptive word listed in the answers) were as follows:

- **"Communication(s)" (35%):** Most responses were listed as simply communication or communications; often other segment titles were added, such as studies, sciences, arts, or management. Others added secondary titles, such as communication and media (frequently), or even as broad as communication and philosophy by one respondent.
- **"Journalism" (9.6%):** This was most often listed with other areas such as mass communication(s) or communication(s).
- **"Public relations" (9.3%):** Many others had public relations as a secondary title. Usually public relations as a primary title was listed alone, but a few responses included the addition of advertising, journalism, corporate communication, or publicity.
- **"Mass communications," "Mass media," or "media" (8.9%):** Again, many of these combined with various other titles listed above as secondary or tertiary titles.
- **"Business" (6.8%)**
- **"Advertising" (5%):** Fourteen respondents listed advertising first, and all but two of those responses also included public relations as a secondary title.
- **"Strategic Communication" (1.8%)**
- **No answer (10.7%)**

(Responses will not equal 100% because of additional individual answers not included with major categories above.)

Department or Academic Unit Where Public Relations Curriculum Is Housed

When questioned about what department or academic unit the public relations curriculum was housed in, the most common department or academic unit named was communications. The responses (categorized below by the first word listed in the answers) were as follows:

- **"Communication(s)" (43.6%):** Often responses were listed as communication arts, communication studies, communication sciences, communication management, communication and media studies, communication and public relations, or communication and media.
- **"Journalism" (9.3%):** This response was usually in combination with other titles such as mass communication, communication, or public relations.
- **"Public relations" (8.6%):** This response showed a virtually even split between being listed alone or with other titles such as advertising, journalism, organizational communication, and corporate communication.
- **"Mass communications," "Mass media," or "media" (8.2%)**
- **"Advertising and public relations" (5.7%)**
- **"Business" (5.4%):** This also includes responses listing business specific areas.
- **"Strategic communication" (2.5%)**
- **No answer (8.2%)**

(Responses will not equal 100% because of additional individual answers not included with major categories above.)

College Where Public Relations Department or Academic Unit Is Housed

When questioned about what academic college the public relations department or academic unit is housed in, the responses were as follows:

- **"Arts and sciences," "liberal arts or studies," "social sciences," and/or "humanities" (34.3%)**
- **"Communication" (17.1%):** Slightly more of the communication responses above were listed alone, but many others included combination titles with information, public relations, journalism, arts, media, or creative arts.

- **"Journalism" (6.8%):** In all cases but one, journalism was teamed with mass media or mass communications as a college title.
- **"Business" (6.1%):** One of these respondents added communication as a second title.
- **"Mass communication," or "media" (3.6%)**
- **"Fine arts" (2.9%):** Most of these responses included communication as a secondary title.
- **No answer (10.7%)**

(Responses will not equal 100% because of additional individual answers not included with major categories above.)

Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications Accreditation

ACEJMC accreditation is for entire units or schools and does not cover a specific program such as public relations. Concerning whether their program was part of a unit accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), 27% indicated they did have this accreditation focused specifically on programs in journalism and mass communication, 53.6% said they did not, 11.8% did not know, and 7.5% did not respond. The Public Relations Society of American certifies public relations programs; its program is described in detail in Chapter 12 Program Certification.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Related to academic structure, governance, or support, perhaps the most significant trend is still the wide variety of locations where public relations is placed in universities. As demonstrated in this chapter, the diversity and breadth of the structure of public relations programs mirror the wide variety of opinions of what should be included in the career field. Important related academic areas of communication, journalism, mass media, business, social sciences, and humanities were often noted as predominant academic centers of instruction for public relations students.

However, this wide variety and lack of consistency could lead to confusion about public relations as a distinct profession. Educators have the responsibility to emphasize how public relations works with other fields and not necessarily "under" other areas.

Progress Since "The Professional Bond"

Many of the concerns identified in the 2006 Report continue to exist.

Public relations degree programs are often still housed in colleges of arts and sciences, journalism, mass communication, communication studies, or similar units. While there is a natural fit with many of these related areas, the absence of the term "public relations" can be a negative for educators and students. It makes it more difficult for students to consider public relations as an area of study if they don't even see the words in the list of departments and programs. There are reported instances of students accidentally "finding" public relations after being in college one or more years, when it may be more difficult to consider it as a major or minor, or an area of study. Some of this anonymity of the field could be because of departmental, college, or school titles.

Another continuing challenge is recognition of the importance of public relations degree programs by universities, This can be more challenging at universities traditionally focused on science, technology, engineering, and math areas. Often administrators at high levels may have little understanding of public relations and the value these students and educators can bring to their respective departments, colleges, and institutions as a whole. Some educators report that there are instances when educators and others may believe that students may choose the public relations degree as a last resort or because it is an easy major. As is often the case, satisfied alumni with influence often can be the best overall examples and continuing influencers for public relations program success.

Trending: The Development of Public Relations Centers

The 2006 Report also emphasized the need for public relations centers to advance the profession through research and education.

- The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations was established at the University of Alabama in 2005 just prior to the last report in 2006 (Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, 2017). This organization offers numerous professional development seminars, research, and grant opportunities, and other special events that greatly impact students and educators. Many of these offerings link practitioners directly with educators and students.

- Similarly, the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication was initiated at Penn State University in the College of Communications in 2004. This organization is dedicated to the "study and advancement of ethics and responsibility in corporate communication and other forms of public communication." It also awards grants and provides curricular support and other resources for educators (Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication, 2017).

- Another excellent example of a center focusing on public relations educators and student development was the establishment in 2012 of the W20 Center for Social Commerce at the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. The center was made possible by a generous alumni gift and continues as a unique partnership between an integrated marketing communications firm and the university. They strive to provide students with training in social commerce, technology, social media, and analytics. The overall goal is to provide students with "cutting-edge skills and insight that will enable them to stand out amongst their peers as they enter the workforce" (Center for Social Commerce, 2017). This program additionally provides the structure for educator training and internship placements.

- The Glen M. Broom Center for Professional Development in Public Relations was established at San Diego State University in 2013 with a three-fold mission to support students (through internships and scholarships), educators (through research support), and the community of public relations practitioners (through professional development seminars). Starting in 2015, the Broom Center also housed the premier scholarly journal in the field, *Journal of Public Relations Research.*

- Also in the southwestern United States, the University of Southern California's Center for Public Relations, based at the Annenberg School in Los Angeles, publishes numerous reports on business trends affecting public relations practice and hosts various symposia for students and practitioners (University of Southern California Center for Public Relations, 2017).

Additional similar centers should be developed to help enhance public relations education at colleges and universities.

Related Issues

There are other areas of interest that relate to structure and support of public relations programs that are covered in Chapter 12.

Recommendations

As discussed above, previous CPRE reports provide a framework for this latest effort. Many ongoing issues remain, and while most are being addressed in some manner, there is work to be done. The recommendations of the chapter authors, below, are based on these continuous efforts as well as on the results of the most recent 2016 Omnibus Survey.

• **Public relations educators should strive to work with practitioners to provide industry-current curriculum in colleges and universities.** Educators should ensure the curriculum being taught is what practitioners in the industry need students to know and understand, and is not being taught just because the course/content has "always been there."

• **Public relations should be taught under the term "public relations."** Ideally, the term public relations should be included in the name of the department or program, possibly as the lead name for departments or colleges, and particularly when the numbers of public relations students far exceed numbers in other majors.

• **Universities should support public relations educators and students.** This survey did not address specific perceived support of public relations educators in terms of travel funds, research funding, or salaries, and additional research should be conducted so that data is available to advance the issue. But to be truly successful academically, public relations educators must have internal assistance from their departments, colleges, and universities to make national and international connections and to learn from others in this emerging field. Student public relations organizations and student-run firms also need similar financial backing.

• **More partnerships should be pursued with alumni and practitioners in order to secure financial support and other assistance to help enhance public relations education programs, where the practitioners of tomorrow are being prepared today.** In addition, professional organizations should continue to increase cross-mentoring between educators and practitioners. All of these efforts can also positively affect academic structure, governance, and curricular updates.

• **Creation of advisory boards—either specifically for public relations programs or at least at the broader departmental, college, or school level—should be encouraged, as they can often very positively impact the public relations curriculum as a whole, as well as facilitate necessary course updates.** These boards also can help with promoting the degree and financially supporting public relations academic growth.

• **Educators also can develop partnerships for themselves and their students with the campus public relations or communications office practitioners.** These programs could include student or faculty internships, educator consulting or advisory opportunities, and research project inclusion for educators and/or majors. For more information on internships, see chapter 13. These team approaches may additionally lead to on-campus employment for graduates and a greater overall understanding of academic focus areas by those providing the messages for the university as a whole. Often these practitioners may be interested and available to teach as adjuncts as well. (Many academic colleges or schools also have public relations offices, such as university relations, , and this is another area that can be pursued for partnerships.)

• **Public relations faculty should also pursue development of partnerships with other academic programs.** The PRSA MBA/Business School Program provides public relations educators with the opportunity to introduce "MBA-level strategic communications courses grounded in reputation management fundamentals into their institutions' curricula." The philosophy of this approach is that business leaders must understand public relations and the impact of effective management of brand reputation, the impact of trust (or lack of) by consumers and other target publics, and the impact corporate communications can have on financial and other results. There are 15 leading universities currently participating in this program to ensure that MBA students who will be the business leaders of the future are well educated about the role and value of public relations (Public Relations Society of America—MBA/Business School Program, 2017).

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"Another continuing challenge is recognition of the importance of public relations degree programs by universities."

Educator Credentials: Evolving Expectations

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Overview

Executives from large public relations firms have said that some of the best new employees come from universities with professionally experienced and credentialed educators. Successful educators must be able to lead and mentor students. In order to do so, educators should have practical experience in the field as well as an understanding of communications technologies that drive public relations. Without these skills and experience, educators cannot properly teach students the skills that are relevant to the public relations field.

In the 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey, practitioners were asked to specify which credentials for educators were the most desirable at four-year institutions. Staying up to date on the latest technologies was seen as the most

desirable credential to maintain, followed by having more than five years of industry experience in public relations. Eighty-five percent of educators self-reported to have five or more years of experience in the field, while only 38 percent reported to have 10 or more years of experience.

The authors recommend that educators also continue to develop personal skills and experience through multiple outlets, including participation on university committees/boards; continuously conducting research; and taking on a leadership role with an industry organization, a faculty internship, or serving as a judge or panelist for a student competition.

Introduction

During the last 20 to 30 years, public relations degree programs have grown from less than a dozen to more than 300 programs at universities across the United States (Chung & Choi, 2012). Like those in any other field in academia, public relations educators at universities are required to meet various standards to be qualified for their positions. Educators are no longer exclusively teachers with doctorate degrees; they are mentors, researchers, and practitioners who have transitioned to academe to provide their expertise from the practice of public relations. When hiring new educators, universities are balancing the credentials and standards they would like their educators to meet to effectively implement the core learning objectives of the university/communication programs. This chapter will cover the topics relating to expectations for new educators and the requirements that should be met for an individual to be considered a qualified educator in a public relations program at a university or college.

New Educator Expectations

When new educators are hired at universities, they are required to have skills that extend beyond the ability to conduct a typical lecture, skills that include addressing the needs of students with different learning styles and how to teach general education courses (Whitfield & Hickerson, 2012). New educators must understand how to effectively research or meet practitioner requirements in their field of study. They must embody a commitment to be well informed and up to date. Educators are expected to be able to help a diverse audience gain new knowledge by relating their own skills and abilities to real-world situations and circumstances.

New educators must be willing and able to adjust to the academic culture and environment of the university at which they are hired. Beyond their teaching roles, educators may be asked to advise students, sit in on various committees or groups, provide leadership and mentorship, and collaborate with their university colleagues. One study showed that recent graduates who were hired as new educators felt they were not well prepared for professional development or how to manage a job in academia (Whitfield & Hickerson, 2012).

A central responsibility of tenure track–faculty is to conduct research in their field. In addition to remaining relevant and up to date on the subjects they are teaching, faculty should be aware that research skills and the ability to commit to difficult projects are important in helping educators achieve tenure. While universities have different educator research requirements, it is generally accepted that educators should create research programs that align with the university's core mission and values. Additionally, scholarly research is vital for educators to stay connected to their discipline (Whitfield & Hickerson, 2012).

Tenured and tenure-track educators have important roles at all universities, including in public relations education programs. According to the National Education Association (NEA), tenured professors help provide students a higher standard of education. Tenured professors (and professors on tenure track) are better able to meet the needs of students, whereas part-time educators may not be able to devote as much time to meeting with students or conducting and participating in ongoing research (Higher Education Departments of the National Education Association; American Federation of Teachers, 2015). While not every university teaching position can be tenured, it is important that there are tenured faculty in public relations programs to help provide leadership and influence in faculty governance. Tenured educators help secure resources and funding and provide sustainability, ensuring that programs remain relevant not only in teaching students worthwhile skills and abilities, but by also leading and directing research that ultimately enhances the public relations industry by testing and verifying that teaching methods and industry practices are achieving their desired output.

There is almost no research on professionals who come to academe to teach full-time loads without a Ph.D. or Ed.D. Some of the titles universities give to these educators include "full-time temporary faculty," "teaching professors," "professors of practice," and "professional-track faculty," among others. Many universities today hire professional-track educators to fulfill teaching duties because tenure-track positions are fewer and tenure-track

educators are unable to handle the demands of teaching themselves. There is little guidance about how these professionals achieve tenure and progress through the ranks from assistant to full professor.

Clearly, however, professional-track educators must be supported and prepared for the classroom and university experience. There is the growing tendency at universities in general to rely on adjunct faculty in addition to professional-track educators. Some adjunct faculty do not receive benefits or professional development support, and are not paid for office hours. Some do and are, but there is very little consistency across higher education. In fact, adjunct faculty are the majority of educators at 10 elite institutions in the United States (Goral, 2014). While the Goral Study did not differentiate between professional and academic or professorial educators, it is important to acknowledge the continued reliance on and use of non-traditional educators to meet the demands of university/communications programs and to address the breadth of needs within public relations programs. The present study addresses educator experience and qualifications as well as publishing and digital technology skills.

Qualified Educator Requirements
University accreditation from established accreditation organizations is a critical component in determining the legitimacy of colleges and departments. One such organization, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), provides details on the qualifications that educators should meet as part of a university's hiring process. HLC explains that educators should possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equal experience is required (Higher Learning Commission, 2016).

The 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond" further solidifies and backs up the HLC's recommendations that public relations educators should have terminal degrees or run the risk of being labeled as "second-tier" professors, lacking the academic and professional experience of their university counterparts. That 2006 Report reiterated original findings from the CPRE 1999 Report "Port of Entry" by stating:

> Qualifications for teaching public relations at a college or university generally include a Ph.D. degree.

Those holding Ph.D. degrees that 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 (p. 71).

CPRE further explained in its 2006 Report that a number of subjects and topics must be taught thoroughly to public relations students. These topics included writing, public speaking, conducting research, strategic and critical thinking skills, ethics, negotiation, how businesses work and operate, and the basics of public relations. While many of these skills and abilities can be acquired through various courses of study, public relations educators must take it upon themselves to ensure that their students are masters of these subjects central to the practice of public relations (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006).

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Credentials for PR Educators
Ultimately, universities need qualified and experienced public relations educators to meet the demands of the professional public relations field. Executives at large public relations firms in the United States have stated that many of their best new employees graduated from academic programs where educators have both practical and academic experience. That being said, the reality is that many programs lack the resources, educators, and facilities related to public relations. This issue compounds itself when students who lack academic credentialing later return to become professors and teach future generations of public relations practitioners (Wright, 2011). To explore the need for academic credentials and experience, educators participating in the 2016 Omnibus Survey were given a list of qualifications and asked how

important they are to educators at four-year institutions. Practitioners were asked similar questions and told to specify the desirability of each credential for educators at four-year institutions. This section outlines the credentials identified by survey respondents as important for educators to consider.

Practitioners and educators who participated in the 2016 Omnibus Survey stated that staying up to date on technology was the single most important credential public relations educators can focus on (see Table 1). When it comes to staying abreast of technology, the majority of educators surveyed (91%) indicated they are striving to become more technologically savvy (see Table 2). Although the survey did not specify how much time educators spend training, or what technology skills they focus on, there are a range of skills educators may acquire to enhance the student experience and help future practitioners prepare for careers in public relations. Examples include content creation programs that facilitate the creation of multi-media content; newer communication technologies that drive both interpersonal and mass communications; social listening, reporting, and engagement tools; and the physical use of technology for the classroom. Both practitioners and educators deem the acquisition of technology skills an important qualification.

Practitioners in the field consider the acquisition of practical experience as being as desirable among educators as technology skills. The knowledge and ability to expertly teach and understand the use of technology for planning and executing public relations strategies is a necessary component of a public relations education required for students preparing for careers in the field. Although an educator's expertise in the area of technology is very important, and a quarter of the educators surveyed had a technology certification, educators need not worry about padding their vitas with technology certifications (e.g., Adobe, Hootsuite, Google, etc.), as the academic community and practitioners did not consider acquiring these certifications to be an important credential. For more information on the importance of technology within the industry, be sure to read Chapter 8 on technology.

The value of industry public relations experience for educators in the field of public relations continues to be a high priority. Industry experience is imperative for educators to acquire a solid understanding of the field and to educate students. Participants in both the academic

and professional communities believe that acquiring at least five years of industry experience is important. Practitioners deem industry experience even more important than educators do and desire educators to have more than 10 years of experience. Although acquiring more than 10 years of experience was not deemed as important a qualification among educators themselves, this result may be indicative of the fact that 85 percent of educators in this study reported having at least five or more years of experience in the field. Fewer educators (38%) had 10 or more years of experience. Additionally, practitioners typically move into academe later in their careers and rely more on their industry experience rather than a Ph.D. for their credentials and contribution to the educational experience. Regardless of the number of years of experience, both practitioners and academics consider industrial experience in public relations to be a key criterion for educators in the field.

Due to the nature of academia and the many requirements needed to obtain and keep many academic positions, publishing peer-reviewed scholarship, presenting at academic research conferences, and having a terminal degree such as a Ph.D. or Ed.D. are all important qualifications for educators. Not surprisingly, these qualifications are considered more important to the academic community than to practitioners. For educators, presenting research at academic conferences is usually the first step before publishing, with 79% of survey respondents indicating they present at academic conferences and 84% indicating they publish peer-reviewed work. Three-fourths of the educators surveyed indicated they possess a terminal degree.

In addition to exploring the value of a terminal degree among PR educators, this survey also explored the perceived value of educators receiving both accreditation by the Universal Accreditation Board, the APR, and accreditation from the International Association of Business Communication, the ABC.

Not surprisingly, practitioners desire educators to obtain accreditation in public relations, but public relations educators don't consider accreditation to be an important qualification for teaching public relations (see Table 1). This discrepancy is perhaps simply a function of the environments in which both work. According to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the APR signifies "a high professional level of experience and competence" (n.d., para. 2), something practitioners spend more time acquiring than most academics.

Clearly, practitioners consider accreditation (specifically APR) one way in which educators can showcase their competence and level of expertise in the field of public relations. Educators, on the other hand, value terminal degrees more than APR, as it is a requirement of the academic institutions in which they work. Surprisingly, even though educators do not value APR as much as practitioners, more than half (62%) of the educators surveyed are accredited. However, it should be acknowledged that this high percentage may be a function of the survey being distributed to members of PRSA, in which many members have accreditation. Unlike APR, only a small percentage of educators (3%) are accredited business communicators. But similar to APR, educators do not consider ABC to be a key benchmark for educators. It should be noted that research has shown public relations educators who are accredited show "differences in frequency of engagement in public relations work categories, as well as differences in frequency of usage of industry competencies, even when the influences of age and experience are controlled (Sha, 2011). This finding adds another level of context to the discussion about whether age and industry experience can always be used as substitutes for accreditation within public relations education (Sha, 2011, p. 10). Outside academia, being involved in non-research industry conferences and publishing in trade publications is not viewed as being extremely important, but it is something public relations educators do. The survey results suggest that not only are educators publishing peer-reviewed research, but they are present at public relations conferences that do not have a research focus (77%) and they are publishing trade pieces (56%).

Among the survey respondents, a total of 67% of educators are tenured or on a tenure track. As practitioners do not work in an environment that requires tenure, it is not surprising that they do not consider this a desirable qualification or see the value of academic rank in students' education. Among the many qualifications practitioners desire for educators, this credential is considered the least important (see Table 1). Educators, on the other hand, consider being in a tenure-track position or having tenure to be more important than acquiring accreditation (APR and ABC), technology certifications, training to teach online, or having more than 10 years of experience.

Despite an increase in the need for and availability of online teaching at universities and colleges (Schmidt,

Hodge, & Tschida, 2013), being trained to teach online is not an important priority among public relations educators or the practitioner community. While 60% of educators indicated they are qualified to teach online, this qualification was not considered an essential credential among educators, even as more and more universities require their educators to teach online classes.

"New, more relevant standards for hiring educators in public relations . . . (should) balance the relevance of public relations industry experience with that of academic experience."

⧓ Recommendations

For public relations educators, it is not enough to obtain the academic credentials needed for employment at an academic institution (e.g., a terminal degree) and then solely contribute to scholarship in this area. The public relations industry demands that students be prepared in a variety of ways and requires educators to be agile in helping them meet those demands. An understanding of the communications technologies that drive public relations as well as practical experience in the field are imperative to the ultimate success of educators, i.e., teaching students skills that are relevant to the public relations field. Both educators and practitioners consider these credentials to be among the most important educator qualifications. Additionally, while many educators are required to conduct peer-reviewed research and present at academic research conferences, many educators publish trade scholarship and present at publication relations conferences that are not research based.

With an ever-evolving communications landscape, the need continues for up-to-date technology expertise in the classroom (e.g., digital and social media use). To prepare students to make a positive impact in the field, public relations educators need to be involved in practice development activities. Therefore, academic institutions need to support educators in taking frequent advantage of opportunities that will keep them abreast of the communications tools and technologies used in the field. However, practice development does not equate to a need for additional certifications (e.g., Hootsuite, Google, Adobe, etc.). And while practitioners believe educators should earn accreditations (e.g., APR), these credentials are not as valued by educators. As a matter of course, professional development for adjunct faculty is entirely up to the discretion of each institutional department and program.

The chapter authors recommend that new, more relevant standards be established for hiring educators in public relations. Using the results of the 2016 Omnibus Survey as a guideline, it is recommended that the new standards balance the relevance of public relations industry experience with that of academic experience.

Recommendations for New Standards

- **Future educators need to be prepared to teach in a rapidly changing field.** More than simply having experience in the public relations field, future educators must know and understand how to effectively teach and convey information across an ever-changing educational landscape; to provide leadership and mentorship to students; to conduct research; and to help provide students with real-world experience.

- **Future educators must be up to date on technology.** Requiring educators to be up to date on technology within the field will help ensure students are receiving information that is relevant to present-day public relations. Building on this report, future research should explore the specific types of communication technology both educators and practitioners value.

- **Future educators should be encouraged to collaborate with, and exchange ideas and insights with, industry leaders.** Further, it is recommended that industry leaders and educators continue to meet on a regular basis to ensure that both parties understand the role that each of them plays in helping create students who will be successful practitioners upon graduation. The public relations industry benefits from research conducted by tenured educators, and the academe of public relations can benefit from a stream of consistent feedback from industry leaders about what practitioners entering the field need to and will need to know in order to be successful.

- **Future educators should have experience in the public relations field prior to teaching.** Experience in the field is certainly an important aspect of finding qualified educators and adds insight, context, and perspective to the educational endeavor. However, it is not the only requirement that should be considered when creating standardized requirements for potential educators to meet.

Additionally, further exploration of the credentials held by educators who have come to academe without a doctorate degree should be undertaken, as well as exploring the growing reliance on adjunct faculty.

Recommendations for Educator Development

- **Educators should work on university committees and other boards, but they can also take every opportunity possible to explain directly in informal settings the true merits of the field.**

  Within their academic institutions, educators can individually demonstrate the value of public relations to others on campus (often those with some budgetary discretion within public relations academic units or beyond). Even serving on faculty or administrative search committees beyond the academic unit can further educate others with little prior understanding of public relations. In addition, educators should contact internal partners through various means to develop internships on campuses that can help students show the value of the profession.

- **Educators should conduct research.** Educators may have opportunities to conduct research with related centers on campus that need public relations expertise. Often these contributions teach and impact those who were not as familiar as needed about the field. Professors can assist with traditional public relations research (such as focus groups, surveys, interviews, and media analysis) and/or more recent developments (such as social media strategies and analytics or applying other newer technologies to traditional topics). This extended work can often explain to others in disparate fields through practice and narrative how true public relations can positively impact an organization.

- **Educators should consider becoming Accredited in Public Relations.** This credential further connects educators with practitioners and demonstrates "professional competence …personal and professional dedication and values…progressive public relations industry practices and high standards" (Universal Accreditation Board – Accredited in Public Relations, 2017). Being accredited also links educators more closely with APR practitioners and can help build more credibility for the individual professor and academic unit(s). Furthermore, earning the APR leads to opportunities for educators to gain more leadership responsibilities through professional organizations and honorary societies. Thus, more positive exposure can be provided for public relations programs and educators.

- **Public relations educators should continually pursue practitioner leadership roles through organizations.** By leading industry organizations, educators can develop relationships with many in the field who can help them individually and in their academic units. Working with practitioners more directly on academic issues could positively impact the structure, governance, and overall support of public relations programs. See Chapter 9 for further information about structure, governance, and overall support of public relations programs.

- **Educators should assertively pursue "internships" for themselves to stay immersed in the continuously evolving field.** This type of experiential learning can help educators stay abreast of trends in the field, especially concerning technology and extended counseling areas, such as corporate social responsibility. These experiences can be accomplished by individual contacts with public relations practitioners or through university centers such as the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama, described in Chapter 9 on Governance of public relations programs.

- **Educators should take opportunities to serve as judges or panelists for speeches or presentation competitions with other campus units.** In addition, educators may have opportunities to evaluate research competitions for graduate schools or honors programs. These various contributions can lead to educators from diverse areas on campus and outside alumni and organizational leaders understanding more about public relations as an important field. Just one of these judging examples is the Three Minute Thesis. This program was developed by the University of Queensland to teach graduate students how to distill their research—which is often very complicated and specific—down into three minutes and one PowerPoint slide targeted toward a more general audience. Students compete and are judged on how well they explain their messages, often to judges who are not familiar at all with the topics (Three Minute Thesis, 2017).

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"Practitioners and educators who participated in the 2016 Omnibus Survey stated that staying up to date on technology was the single most important credential public relations educators can focus on."

Table 1:
Importance of Credentials for PR

Credentials of PR Educators	Educators M(SD)	Practitioners M (SD)	t (df)
Stays up to date on technology	4.40 (0.84)	4.63 (0.64)	-3.82 (440.38)***
Has more than 5 years' professional experience in PR	4.02 (1.14)	4.51 (0.75)	-6.14 (399.54)***
Publishes peer-reviewed scholarship	3.90 (1.10)	3.32 (1.04)	6.83 (673)***
Presents at academic research conferences	3.90 (1.01)	3.29 (1.08)	7.30 (675)***
Has a Ph.D., Ed.D., or terminal degree	3.82 (1.19)	3.28 (1.12)	5.93 (672)***
Presents at non-research professional conferences	3.46 (1.03)	3.58 (1.01)	-1.47 (671)
Is tenured or tenure-track	3.32 (1.36)	2.93 (1.12)	3.89 (462.01)***
Publishes trade scholarship	3.23 (1.03)	3.25 (1.01)	-.17 (669)
Has more than 10 years' professional experience in PR	3.15 (1.31)	4.60 (0.71)	-16.35 (350.03)***
Is trained to teach online	2.90 (1.30)	3.14 (1.15)	-2.40 (493.77)*
Is Accredited in PR (APR/APR+M)	2.70 (1.36)	3.72 (1.26)	-9.92 (673)***
Has earned certifications (Adobe, Hootsuite, Google, etc.)	2.38 (1.18)	3.00 (1.21)	-6.59 (553.46)***
Is an Accredited Business Communicator (ABC)	2.03 (1.11)	3.11 (1.13)	-12.07 (668)***

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Note. Public relations educators were asked to rate the importance of each credential for educators at four-year institutions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important). Public relations practitioners were asked a very similar set of questions, namely how desired each credential is for educators at four-year institutions. Desirability was measured on a scale from 1 (not desired) to 5 (highly desired). Independent sample t tests revealed significant differences between all but two items.

Table 2:
Credentials Public Relations Educators Possess

Credentials	%
Stays up to date on technology	91%
Has more than 5 years' professional experience in PR	85%
Presents at academic research conferences	84%
Publishes peer-reviewed scholarship	79%
Presents at non-research professional conferences	77%
Has a Ph.D., Ed.D.., or terminal degree	74%
Is tenured or tenure-track	67%
Is Accredited in PR (APR/APR+M)	62%
Publishes trade scholarship	56%
Is trained to teach online	60%
Has more than 10 years' professional experience in PR	38%
Has earned certifications (Adobe, Hootsuite, Google, etc.)	25%
Is an Accredited Business Communicator (ABC)	3%

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Note. Public relations educators were asked to rate the importance of each credential for educators at four-year institutions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important). Public relations practitioners were asked a very similar set of questions, namely how desired each credential is for educators at four-year institutions. Desirability was measured on a scale from 1 (not desired) to 5 (highly desired). Independent sample t tests revealed significant differences between all but two items.

Online Public Relations Education:
Adapting Public Relations Curricula to an Emerging Delivery System

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Overview

Online education is an increasingly popular choice among both students and academic institutions. While the growth in digital learning has increased rapidly in the last decade, there are still substantial concerns by the general public, and hiring managers in particular, over the quality and depth of education students receive in an online course. If institutions want to advance online public relations education, they should be prepared to invest financially in learning management systems and educator training. Additionally, institutions should develop systems to review student learning, in order to ensure online courses provide the same level of education as traditional face-to-face courses.

Introduction

Online education continues to be a growing option of choice among students around the globe. Courses that are considered "online learning" deliver at least 80% of the content online. "Blended learning," also known as hybrid, delivers between 30 and 80% of the content online (Allen & Seaman, 2016, p. 7). *The Online Reporting Card – Tracking Online Education in the United States,* an annual report administered by the Babson Survey Research Group, has analyzed online education in the U.S. for the past thirteen years. This report found that "with more than one in four students (28%) taking some of their courses at a distance, these courses seem to have become a common part of the course delivery modality for many students," (Allen & Seaman, 2016, p. 12).

Growth of Online Education

While the concept of distance learning has been part of the educational model since the 1700s (Miller, 2014, para. 2), online education began in the 1990s (Chao, Saj, & Tessier, 2006, para. 1). Allen & Seaman (2016) reported that as of fall 2014 there were a total of 5.8 million students taking part in distance education; however, 2.85 million of those students were taking all of their courses online while 2.97 million were only taking some courses online (pg. 4). Not surprisingly, the number of students who are not taking any online courses continues to drop year to year (Allen & Seaman, 2016, pg. 4). While the growth of online education continues, distance education also presents challenges such as learning to create effective online assignments that engage students, especially in public relations, where team-based learning and collaboration are key (Smallwood & Brunner, 2017).

Challenges for Online Education

Despite the growing interest and enrollment in online programs, the general perceptions of such degrees seem to be doubted. Gallup, for example, found that, while people appreciated the options and value afforded by online education, the "majority calls [online programs] only 'fair' or 'poor' (Saad, Busteed, & Ogisi, 2013, para. 3). These concerns have an overall impact on perceptions of the quality of an online education versus a traditional format, qualifications of job applicants who obtain degrees from online courses, and overall learning that can occur for students in an online environment.

Perceptions and Performance in Online Education Courses

While students feel that online courses require more discipline and effort, 53% feel they learn "about the same" as in face-to-face courses; 42% feel they learn less than in traditional courses (Bidwell, 2013, para. 4). In addition, students seem to have a higher likelihood to withdraw from online courses (Community College Research Center, 2013). In addition to the perception regarding the rigor and support for students in online courses among the general public, research has found that employers prefer candidates who have a traditional degree. However, despite 56% preferring a traditional education, 82% acknowledged that a combination of traditional and online education would benefit students (Bidwell, 2013, para. 2). Educators also struggle with the perceptions of online education. While 72% of academic leaders feel the

learning outcomes are the same or superior in online education, only 29% of chief academic officers believe their educators "accept the value and legitimacy of online education" (Allen & Seaman, 2016, pp.5-6).

The Future of Online Education

While for-profit educational institutions may have been a driving force with building public knowledge and affinity toward online education, the recent focus on the failings of this education model has impacted for-profit online enrollment. Seaman, the co-director of the Babson Survey Research Group and co-author of the annual report focused on online education, explains this trend by saying, "I think that there's been a change in potential students' perceptions of the for-profit sector because there's been a whole series of negative things coming out about that— about marketing issues and the quality of education," (Friedman, 2016, para. 6). While the future of education seems to be more students completing part or all of their degrees online, for-profit enrollment in online programs has now begun to decline. Additionally, *U.S. News & World Report* cites a "greater emphasis on nontraditional credentials" and "increased use of big data to measure student performance" as trends to expect in online education (Friedman, 2017).

> "The majority of public relations educators and practitioners do not view an online degree as equal to a traditional face-to-face degree."

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

With the growth of online education, public relations programs have also transitioned into offering part or all of a degree online. Of the 266 educators who responded to the 2016 Omnibus Survey used in this report, nearly 47% confirmed their programs offer online public relations courses. While many courses are offered online, fewer programs are found exclusively online. Only 5% of educators reported having an online-only public relations degree available for students.

The majority of public relations educators and practitioners do not view an online degree as equal to a traditional face-to-face degree (see Table 1). Similarly, there is a belief that job candidates should disclose whether they have taken all or part of their educational courses online (see Table 1).

Table 1	Educators	Practitioners
	Strongly disagreed or disagreed	Strongly disagreed or disagreed
An online PR degree is equal to a traditional face-to-face degree	60%	58%
	Strongly agreed or agreed	Strongly agreed or agreed
Job applicants should disclose if all their degree coursework has been completed online	66%	71%
Job applicants should disclose if part of their degree coursework was taken online	46 %	45 %

Educational standards for those who teach online are also a growing focus within public relations education. In responding to the importance of having educators trained to teach online, 32% of educators felt that this was important or extremely important. Similarly, nearly 39% of public relations practitioners felt that having an educator trained to teach online is desirable or highly desirable. Of the educators who responded, nearly 60% report being trained to teach online.

Progress Since The 2006 CPRE Report

Since 2006, when the last report was issued concerning online education for public relations, there have been some great strides made. At the time of the last report, very few public relations courses were available online, nor was there any complete online undergraduate degree available. The courses that did exist online were modeled after the 1999 *Port of Entry* recommendations: public relations principles, writing, research, case problems, and campaigns. Now, multiple institutions have degrees entirely online, and providing online options for students is a mainstay in the educational models at institutions. Many educators reported offering the same content online as they do for face-to-face instruction. Three main recommendations from the 2006 Report included ensuring programs had proper resources, developing proper pedagogical approaches for an online learning environment, and ensuring there is quality control in online education. Those seem to continue to be the main areas of focus for educators and practitioners who evaluate online programs.

Progress Since The 2006 CPRE Report

- **Academic programs must recognize the financial investment required to provide a robust distance education.** The technical infrastructure costs of delivering a high-quality online experience, especially one that includes live-streaming or webinar-style interactions between students and educators, may also impact the overall satisfaction rates among students and educators. Access to software, apps, and digital tools to enhance the learning experience will likely significantly impact the overall experience for a course. Thus, programs planning to offer or already offering online educational opportunities should recognize the financial investment required to provide a robust distance education.

- **Institutions should review teaching practices and approaches by online educators to ensure online courses have the same rigor and academic level as traditional courses.** As with the 2006 Report, the recommendation for pedagogical training continues to be a significant area in online education. Particularly as public relations educators seek to blend theory and practical educational experiences into a robust online experience, proper qualifications are necessary. Online education is more than simply

moving a traditional course into an online environment. The entire structure should be adapted to represent pedagogical approaches that are suited for both a digital context and for student learning in an online environment. Ensuring that online courses are the same rigor and academic level as traditional courses necessitates a review of teaching practices and approaches by online educators.

- **In addressing program quality, educators should consider the learning outcomes, performance, job placement, and self-reported learning of students in courses.** Perhaps one of the largest areas of growth within online public relations programs will be the need to address both perceived and actual quality issues. While a majority of educators and practitioners still wrestle with the nature of online education and its comparison to traditional formats, Jeff Davidson, strategic initiatives manager of The Free Education Initiative at the Saylor Foundation, believes that, eventually, public perception will catch up with the reality that there are many quality online programs. He commented that "Perception will catch up with reality, that there are quality programs…Is every program quality? Of course not. But that's true with a building, too" (Bidwell, 2013, para. 14). In addressing program quality, educators should consider the learning outcomes, performance, job placement, and self-reported learning of students in courses. These metrics can be used as indicators of quality and provide a testimony for institutions to use in showcasing their program's academic approach.

- **Online courses should have a strategic assessment plan.** A growing area of need is in the assessment of online education. Just as the pedagogical approaches to online teaching must adjust for the environment, so too does the approach to assessment. In order to ensure that students are receiving a quality education, retaining knowledge, and integrating the new material within their individual learning frameworks, online courses should have a strategic assessment plan. Rigorous assessment processes will allow academic programs to measure the learning in their online and traditional courses. This information can be used to identify assignments and courses that need adjustment, practices and competencies that are working effectively in the online environment, and identify key curriculum components that may need to be reviewed by the educators to further enhance student learning.

"Now, multiple institutions have degrees entirely online, and providing online options for students is a mainstay in the educational models at institutions."

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Program Certification and Accreditation:
Defining Standards for Undergraduate Programs

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Overview

The number of public relations programs worldwide continues to grow. However, the percentage of those accredited or certified remains low despite the opportunities provided by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) for credentialing services that recognize the achievement of rigorous standards of excellence. Also, the Canadian Public Relations Society's Pathways Program has helped institutions improve their programs' quality and relevance to current professional best practices. The value of self-examination and quality assurance remains critically important.

The accompanying outside review of public relations programs, which is required for accreditation and certification, can offer critical insights and benchmarks as well as opportunities for program improvement and innovation. The volunteers who conduct the site visits and write the final reviews are practitioners and educators who are committed to the excellent and ethical practice of public relations and to providing the best education possible for the young practitioners who will define the future of our field.

The Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) identifies two main challenges moving forward: the importance of increasing awareness and knowledge of the benefits of accreditation and certification, and the need for more trained public relations practitioners for site visits and program evaluation to ensure recognized credentialing programs have the resources to meet greater demand.

Introduction

This chapter reviews changes in, and challenges for, the PRSA and ACEJMC processes since the 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond" and presents recommendations relating to program accreditation and certification.

Public relations programs and the number of students enrolled in those programs have continued to grow in the United States and around the world during the past decade. Current estimates place the number of these programs at more than 1,200. Only two organizations—the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC)—are involved in formal review of and designation of undergraduate and master's-level public relations programs in the U.S., Canada, and abroad. PRSA is the only certification program specifically and exclusively for public relations programs. ACEJMC has a broader program that accredits units in journalism and mass communication, and the review of public relations programs is as a component of a unit, so the programs are covered under the overall unit accreditation.

Both are voluntary external review procedures for degree-granting programs, and both are designed to ensure the quality of education in public relations, journalism, and mass communication worldwide, with PRSA's Certificate in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) designation focusing exclusively on public relations.

ACEJMC's mission statement endorses "professional education that recognizes and incorporates technological advances, changing professional and economic practice, and public interests and demands." The Council maintains that the best career preparation for students is to study in accredited programs at colleges and universities.

Both PRSA and ACEJMC offer accreditation or certification for a six-year period. Programs must then apply for re-accreditation or re-certification for another six years.

About 30% of educators who responded to the 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey used for this report indicated that their programs were accredited through ACEJMC; nearly 18% of educators indicated their programs held PRSA's Certificate in Education for Public Relations

(CEPR). Very few programs hold dual credentials with both the ACEJMC and CEPR. In part, the small number of those with dual credentials reflects the fact that public relations programs at many institutions are not housed within schools of journalism and mass communication and would therefore not be eligible for ACEJMC review. Still, several accredited schools do have public relations programs that would also potentially qualify for CEPR but have not applied. Recently, PRSA has made greater efforts to reach out to these programs—and to emphasize the financial and operational benefits of seeking both accreditation and certification during the same time period. Both accreditation and certification involve fees and other costs that are described in sections of this chapter highlighting features of both processes.

Although certified or accredited undergraduate degree public relations programs at all non-profit colleges and universities remain in the minority, the numbers have grown steadily over the past two and a half decades, as competition for top students and faculty has grown. For example, the number of certified programs has more than doubled since 2008. In 2006, PRSA conducted two site visits for its CEPR. In 2017, PRSA anticipates 19 visits and expects continued increases for the next several years. ACEJMC has experienced 20% growth over the past 25 years and has seen greater demand for site visits over the past decade. Both certification and accreditation have also continued to add more international programs.

While the Canadian Public Relations Society does not have a certification/accreditation process, it has developed Pathways to the Profession in response to requests for support from Canadian institutions. Pathways' integrated program planning model emphasizes program outcomes and offers course framework recommendations. It helps institutions assess their own programs and provides a context for future curriculum development.

Research for this chapter included an analysis of 2016 Omnibus Survey results, as well as a review of materials from and discussions with ACEJMC, PRSA, CPRS, and the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management.

ACEJMC Accreditation

Founded in 1945, the American Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication was initially an association of journalism education and newspaper organizations with the aim of evaluating and accrediting journalism programs in the United States. Over time, the Council broadened its mission and its membership to encompass mass communication, which expanded to include such disciplines as public relations and advertising. It also began accrediting master's degrees as well as undergraduate programs, both nationally and internationally. In 1980, the American Council changed its name to the "Accrediting Council." Today, it is the agency formally recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) for accrediting programs in journalism and mass communication in institutions of higher learning.

The Council's vision statement outlines its leadership in establishing and advancing standards of excellence, monitoring and reporting on trends and developments in professional practice and business models, providing a forum for assessing the effects of these trends and developments, assisting programs to understand the value of and seek accreditation, and communicating the value of accreditation to students, parents, educators, and employers.

In practice, ACEJMC accreditation is available to schools, colleges, or departments offering professional programs to prepare college students for careers in journalism and mass communication. Public relations departments, majors, or concentrations within the journalism/mass communications unit may be reviewed as part of the accreditation process and are covered under accreditation offered to the unit. However, the public relations program does not receive individual separate accreditation.

Membership and Governance

Currently, four members on the Council represent the public relations industry—three from PRSA and one from the Arthur Page Society. Advertising has two members representing, respectively, the American Advertising Federation and the American Academy of Advertising. Each member pays an annual dues fee, with rates based on a tiered system.

The Council employs an executive director who maintains records, provides assistance for schools in the self-study process, and arranges site visits and Council meetings. The organizational structure includes an Appeals Board and an Accrediting Committee, which is elected by the Council and composed of eight educators and seven industry representatives.

Accreditation Process

ACEJMC accreditation is voluntary. The chief executive of a college or university seeking accreditation formally invites the ACEJMC executive director to make an initial site visit—generally three to five years before the full-team site visit is expected. Following that first visit, the formal process is initiated with the self-study—a rigorous, detailed examination of the program by faculty, administrators, and students—that addresses ACEJMC standards and criteria for quality. Once the Council has received and reviewed the self-study, a team of educators and practitioners, appointed by the Council, visits the campus to meet with faculty, students, and administrators and assess curriculum, facilities, and resources. If the unit includes a public relations component, the team will include a public relations representative.

Only practitioners and educators who have completed ACEJMC-authorized training may serve on site teams. In fact, the growth in units seeking accreditation has presented some challenges for ACEJMC in finding enough trained educators and practitioners to serve on teams. ACEJMC is increasing efforts to identify and train, in particular, more public relations practitioners to serve on teams. Only six percent of educators and three percent of practitioners who responded to the survey for this report had served on an ACEJMC site team.

In 2017, the Council had 111 programs with full accreditation status and seven with provisional status. Seventy-three public relations programs were covered under ACEJMC accreditation.

PRSA Certification In Education for Public Relations (CEPR)

PRSA introduced its Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR) in 1989. Described by the Society as an investment in the quality of public relations education, certification is a voluntary program. Similarly to ACEJMC, the program measures candidates for certification against a set of rigorous standards. However, only public relations programs may apply for certification. Concerning whether programs had the CEPR granted by the PRSA Educational Affairs Committee, 16% of the 2016 Omnibus Survey respondents indicated they did have the certification, more than 63% responded they did not, a surprising 13% did not know, and nearly eight percent of educators did not answer whether or not their programs were certified. As of September 2017, according to PRSA, there are 38 bachelor's programs around the world holding this designation.

Additionally, a post-graduate, non-degree-granting program at Seneca College, Toronto, Canada, has also been certified, but there is no formal process for reviewing such programs. So far, efforts to develop criteria for a separate certification program for this rapidly growing area have not led to a concrete proposal for consideration by PRSA.

Structure and Certification Process

PRSA's Educational Affairs Committee, a standing committee of both public relations professionals and educators, administers CEPR. The committee is traditionally led by an educator and a practitioner who serve as co-chairs. To seek certification, colleges and universities submit a detailed application, which is very similar to the ACE-JMC self-study. Once an application is reviewed and accepted, the committee appoints a two-person site visit team, including an educator and a practitioner. Although no formal training is provided for team members, at least one member of the team must have had previous review experience. About seven percent of educators and two percent of practitioners who responded to the survey for this report said they had made CEPR site visits.

Site team members meet with faculty, students, and administrators and assess curriculum, facilities, and resources during a two-to-three-day campus visit. The team evaluates the program against eight standards that are closely aligned with the recommendations for best practices for graduate and undergraduate public relations programs published by CPRE. These standards include public relations curriculum; public relations faculty; resources, equipment, and facilities; public relations students; assessment; professional affiliations; relationships with total unit and university; and diversity and global perspective. In particular, candidates for certification must offer courses in principles, writing, research, campaigns/case studies, and experiential learning.

> " (There is) the need for more trained public relations practitioners for site visits and program evaluation to ensure recognized credentialing programs have the resources to meet greater demand."

CPRS Pathways to the Profession Program

The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) has worked closely for several years with many of Canada's post-secondary institutes to support the development and implementation of programs in public relations (PR) and communications management (CM). Its primary focus has been on providing advice to educators about current public relations practices that can be incorporated into the curriculum.

In response to growing requests from institutes to offer a process and support for consistency in curriculum and program planning that would lead to formal CPRS recognition and endorsement of educational programs, CPRS established the National Council on Education in 2008. Although the Council initially planned to develop guidelines and an overview of program requirements that would reflect current practice, it determined that the diversity of programs and methods of delivery precluded a single set of learning criteria that would reflect a national standard. As a result, the Council developed the Pathways to the Profession Program in 2011 as an alternative for addressing this issue.

Inspired by the "Port of Entry" and "Professional Bond" reports by CPRE, the CPRS Pathways to the Profession provides an innovative, made-in-Canada, outcomes-based approach to public relations education. This approach, in turn, connects directly to an equally innovative recognition program for institutions. Pathways uses an integrated program-planning model that emphasizes program outcomes along with recommendations for a course framework. The model offers institutes a way to assess their own programs and to provide context for ongoing and future curriculum development.

The Pathways recognition program is based on a review of a program's alignment with the Pathways curriculum standards, which outline five different Pathway levels into the profession. Each of these levels follows a course framework to ensure specific outcomes are achieved. Seeking recognition is a voluntary process for Canadian institutes, just as it is for ACEJMC accreditation and PRSA certification. The institutes report that achieving recognition is an important sign to industry, employers, and current and future students that an educational program offers sound preparation in public relations and communications management.

The Pathways Review Committee will only consider applications from recognized Canadian post-secondary institutions whose programs effectively demonstrate or demonstrate a strategy toward incorporating:

- pathways outcomes into the educational program and performance measures into courses,
- recommended content elements in program design,
- sound curriculum and program design,
- institutional commitment from the institute for the program and appropriate resourcing,
- professional accreditation, such as the APR, of core faculty members or teaching instructors,
- promotion of the CPRS national conference and educators' programming to teaching faculty,
- active consultation with CPRS on the Pathways process, and
- five-year review cycles, which correspond with the recognition timelines.

Nine programs, out of approximately 50 that would be eligible for Pathways recognition, have completed the process thus far. Several others indicated they have used the Pathways model when developing their own curriculum for new programs in public relations. CPRS has noted the Province of Ontario curriculum standards for post-secondary public relations programs, published in 2014, aligned with the outcomes-based approach pioneered in the Pathways; and, recognized the indispensable elements of public relations education: maintaining ethical standards, serving the public interest, and realizing organizational goals.

⫸ Recommendations

The current challenge surrounding certification and accreditation is twofold: to increase the awareness of the importance of accreditation/certification and to develop the resources needed to meet current and future demands.

The chapter authors recommend:

- **Increased efforts by PRSA, ACEJMC, and CPRS to raise awareness of the value of accreditation/certification** of undergraduate and master's degree–level public relations programs by colleges and universities as well as by employers of graduates of these programs;

- **Expanded efforts to recruit and train public relations practitioners to serve on site-visit teams** for accrediting organizations; additionally, the CEPR review and report-writing processes would benefit from the development of a training program for site-team members;

- **Exploration of creating a tailored accreditation/certification process** for post-graduate, non-degree public relations programs;

- **Increased efforts to have an expanded public relations presence on the Accrediting Council.**

Internships:
Bringing Public Relations Learning to Life

Internships Chapter Team

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Overview

Based on the research summarized here, the Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) continues to recognize that internships are an integral part of public relations education. It is recommended that internships be required in public relations programs, and that pre-requisites are mandatory so skills and abilities are strengthened on the job, rather than learned. To ensure an effective internship, students should be supervised by those who have the skills and abilities needed to aid a student pursuing a career in public relations. We also recommend that a designated university internship coordinator be assigned to students completing an internship. This provides support for the student and will help best represent the university when questions or issues arise.

While interns should be treated ethically and valued, either monetarily or through academic credit, for their work, we recommend interns be paid to set higher standards, and to increase the value of work interns are given. It should also be recognized that evaluation, by not only the on-site supervisor, but also by the student and the internship coordinator, is essential to ensure outcomes are met. Academic programs should devote resources to ensure students are prepared to best represent themselves and their academic institutions in their internships.

Introduction

Experiential learning has remained a strong foundation of the public relations curriculum, providing students an educational opportunity while applying learned skills, typically outside the classroom. The National Society for Experiential Education (2014), provides a common description of best practices in the experiential learning literature: intention; preparedness and planning; authenticity; reflection; orientation and training; monitoring and continuous improvement; assessment and evaluation, and acknowledgment. The benefits of experiential learning are evident. A comprehensive meta-analysis of published works on the effects of experiential learning on students and educators demonstrated measurable benefits for students, including student persistence and retention; increased academic, civic and career outcomes; and increased positive personal and social outcomes (Furco, 2012).

There are numerous types of contemporary experiential learning, including but not limited to apprenticeships and clinical experiences, fellowship experiences, internship experiences, service-learning experiences, practicums, research opportunities, simulations and game/role-playing, and study abroad. This report will focus on one specific type of experiential learning: the supervised internship experience. Supervised internship experiences for the purposes of this report are job-related, hands-on experiences with an experienced supervisor for a predetermined duration in the for-profit private sector, non-profit and non-government sector, or government sector. These supervised internship experiences will be referred to as "internships" throughout this report. In this report, the authors will review secondary research related to internships, discuss results of the 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey, and offer recommendations.

Research Report

Defining Internships

Not all internships are created equal, and even though practitioners may refer to an experience as an internship, some would not meet the standards in our definition. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2016):

"An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent." Internships are an educational experience that allow students the opportunity to:

1) test the waters in a career field;
2) gain valuable work experience under close and constant supervision; and
3) explore and apply classroom content, including theory, toward a work experience away from the classroom.

Internships should involve students in meaningful projects based on employer needs (not clerical work). Additionally, as stated by the Commission on Public Relations Education (2015), internships should provide value for both the student and employer, provide some form of compensation for the intern's work, and, whenever possible, provide a pipeline for students to future employment.

The 1999 Commission Report recommended that a supervised work experience, or internship, should be either a required course in a public relations major or a recommended course in a public relations emphasis (rather than a full major). In the subsequent 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond," an internship experience was listed as one of the five core courses that should be required for every public relations graduate. The 2006 CPRE report referred to a supervised work experience most commonly as an "internship" with criteria of how this should be defined, as variations exist with both academics and practitioners. Once again, research conducted by the Commission for this report reaffirmed the central importance of internships for public relations students.

Internship Requirements and Standards

While this report surveyed an international audience, the United States is one of the few countries to have federal requirements regarding internships. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides standards for wages and overtime compensation employers are required to pay for covered employees, who are not otherwise exempt. FLSA defines the term "employ" very broadly: to "suffer or permit to work." Internships in the for-profit private sector will most often be viewed as employment and thus subject to applicable minimum wage and overtime

requirements, according to the Department of Labor (2010), unless the following six criteria are met:

1) The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training that would be given in an educational environment;
2) The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
3) The intern does not displace regular employees, but instead works under close supervision of existing staff;
4) The company that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern and, on occasion, its operations may actually be impeded;
5) The intern is not automatically entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6) The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

The Department of Labor (2010) provides practical advice for structuring an internship program in the for-profit sector that meet the above standards, including but not limited to:

1) The internship should be more structured around a classroom or academic experience as opposed to the employer's actual operations;
2) The internship should provide the student with skills that can be used in a variety of employment settings as opposed to skills particular to one employer's operation;
3) The internship provides job shadowing opportunities under close and constant supervision;
4) The interns should not be a substitute for regular workers or to augment its existing workforce during specific time periods; and
5) The internship should not be a trial period with the expectation that the intern will then be hired on a permanent basis.

Additionally, some states and local governments have wage and hour requirements for internships. Due to the strict federal requirements of organizations who do not pay interns and a flurry of recent lawsuits, some legal scholars suggest all private employers should treat interns as employees and pay them minimum wage and overtime (Leonor, 2015).

"All internships should be paid. Paying interns will help set higher standards and value the quality of work given."

According to the FLSA (2010), however, an exception is made for volunteering with specific types of organizations. "Unpaid internships in the public sector and for non-profit charitable organizations, where the intern volunteers without expectation of compensation, are generally permissible." The Wage and Hour Division is reviewing the need for additional guidance on internships in the public and nonprofit sectors.

Unpaid Internships
Regardless of the type of organization, there are concerns about not paying interns. For example, unpaid interns in the U.S. may be more vulnerable in regard to sexual harassment and protection against discrimination because they are not technically "employees" under the federal Civil Rights Act; they may not be protected to the same extent by agencies such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In some cases, students in unpaid internships may pay to participate in an internship whether through academic credit or their living expenses. In addition, for-profit private sector companies that have internship programs without pay unintentionally limit their talent pool by excluding graduates and school-leavers that can't afford to take an unpaid position.

The Public Relations Society of America's *Professional Standards Advisory PS-17: Ethical Use of Interns* (2011) report contends students may face hidden costs from taking an unpaid or low-paying internship and opportunities may be limited for low-income or self-supporting students. Interns may also be reluctant to complain about working conditions, since interns may fear being cast as troublemakers throughout their careers. Also, ethics plays a role when firms or agencies bill clients for an intern's time but fail to pay interns.

PRSA's *Professional Standards Advisory PS-17: Ethical Use of Interns* (2011) report also notes some other important considerations regarding student factors, institutional factors, and the public relations internship environment. The ethical employ of interns ensures students receive an educational benefit and opportunity rather than engaging in menial tasks such as copying and filing documents.

CPRE reaffirms recommendations from the 2006 recommendations that sponsoring organizations of all types—companies, firms, government agencies and nonprofits—should pay public relations students for internships. Raising the value of internships will help to

dispel the "intern as gopher" myth and ensure that students take their experiences as seriously as their programs and supervisors see them.

Importance of Effective Internships
Internships help students experience and apply their skills in different areas of public relations. According to the Canadian Public Relations Society (2011), employers most look for "critical thinking, teamwork and analytical ability, along with a strong work ethic, and an ability to multitask and manage time effectively under the pressure of competing deadlines."

According to the University of Tennessee's *Experience learning: The University of Tennessee Quality Enhancement Plan* (2015), in general, research into supervised internship experiences and experiential learning demonstrates four significant student learning outcomes, including:
- Engaged scholarship and lifelong learning.
- Developed and applied knowledge, values, and skills in solving real-world problems.
- Collaborative work.
- Structured reflection.

For internships to remain a skill-building and educational opportunity, student interns should be supervised by those who have the appropriate skills for a student pursuing a career in public relations. It is difficult to expect students to receive accurate feedback and growth from a supervisor unfamiliar with the profession. Further, it is important that public relations supervisors serve as ethical counselors to students in order to build a stronger foundation for ethical leaders in the future.

Additionally, internships need direct oversight within the academic unit and organization to ensure proscribed outcomes are being met. Internships should be evaluated similarly to courses, giving students and employers a voice about their experience. Internship coordinators must ensure students are receiving proper guidance and training, and verify that program-centric learning outcomes have been met. The student will seek out guidance before, during, and after the internship experience and having a primary advisor for these professional matters will be imperative for the success of the student and the reputation of the program in the profession. Educators who oversee internships should receive additional release time, service or teaching consideration, or compensation for coordinating internships.

Evaluation of the internship by all parties involved is also critical to the overall effectiveness of the program. Students should be able to assess what they learned and the value of the mentoring they received, and give feedback on the overall experience. Supervisors should be able to evaluate interns the same as they would a recent hire, so that interns can build their skills and enhance their chances for opportunities upon graduation.

This assessment will help provide information to students, supervisor, and programs, in terms of benefits. In general, the more an internship program is structured around a classroom or academic experience, as opposed to the employer's actual operations, the more likely the internship will be viewed as an extension of the individual's educational experience. This integration often occurs where a college or university exercises oversight over the internship program and provides educational credit.

Internships should not be considered a method for "testing out" potential employees. For unpaid interns, per the FLSA, employers cannot hire every intern upon completion of the internship, and interns cannot displace regular employees. The FLSA (2010) states, "Further, unpaid internships generally should not be used by the employer as a trial period for individuals seeking employment at the conclusion of the internship period."

The internship experience is an extremely valuable asset to the profession. Requiring public relations courses prior to the internship, such as an introductory class, writing, or research, helps students have a basic understanding of public relations and allows students to apply skills learned in the classroom. Programs should make sure that students are not learning public relations "on the job" but instead are enhancing the reputation of themselves and their programs by being well prepared in advance in order to succeed during the internship experience. In addition to expanding students skills and abilities, internships can help introduce students from varying backgrounds to the field of public relations, and can aid in improving the lack of diversity in the field. To learn more about the current state of diversity within the field of public relations be sure to read Chapter 15 in this report.

Faculty Internships

An innovative approach to improving student internships is offering faculty internships. Faculty internships enhance educators' development by providing opportunities to increase practical application of discipline-specific content. Faculty internships bring together industry practitioners and educators to bridge the gap between what is taught in the classroom and what is expected in the professional environment. Educators also reported that their internship experiences helped them re-evaluate how they might infuse experiential learning opportunities into their classes and restructure their syllabi (Herron & Morrozzo, 2008). The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations' *Educator Fellowship Program,* founded in 2010, matches educators to their hosts based on specific areas of interest, expertise and geographic preference. The program consists of an intensive, two-week summer fellowship developed specifically for public relations educators, which allows the educator fellows to develop or enhance skills in professional development, leadership and networking. Faculty internships are one of the recommendations of CPRE's 2015 *Industry-Educator Summit on Public Relations Education.*

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

The following section discusses findings from the 2016 Omnibus Survey to determine how educators and practitioners regard, offer, and evaluate their internship programs within their organizations and academic units.

Similar to the opinions expressed by respondents in the 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond," the 2016 respondents, both practitioners and educators, reaffirmed the importance of including "Supervised Experiences" as one of the five required courses in an undergraduate PR major. Nine out of ten practitioners (90%) said the "supervised experience" or internship should be a required course. While nine out of ten educators (90%) reported internships were taught in their program, only 51 percent required the course, a significant discrepancy in what practitioners look for in entry-level hires.

Regarding the desirability of an internship on a one-to-five scale (1 = not desired; 5 = highly desired), practitioners contend entry-level hires that have completed an internship prior to being hired are "highly desired" (M = 4.62, SD = .768). Practitioners report differences, however, exist in how often they actually have entry-level hires that have completed internships (M = 3.79, SD = .898).

Forty percent of educators state their academic unit has a training program to prepare students for internships. Some institutions have requirements for students before starting an internship. Students most often had to complete a prerequisite course (17.7%) such as "Introduction to Public Relations," a minimum number of credit hours (16.8%) or have a minimum GPA (11.7%).

Additionally, the 2016 Omnibus Survey revealed which methods are being used for internship assessment in academic units. The reported methods for assessment are as follows:
- A performance review from a supervisor (24.4%)
- A performance review from the intern (19.8%)
- A term paper or report from the intern (17.5%).
- Portfolio review (23.1%)
- Performance review from the internship coordinator (17.3%).

As an internship is considered a training opportunity, internship coordinators should ensure that students are placed with experienced practitioners as supervisors. Practitioners were more likely than educators to report that their organizations match interns to supervisors within the field and that supervisors adequately instruct and evaluate their interns (see Table 1).

When practitioners and educators were asked about the value of student work experiences and to the degree to which organizations value the work interns perform, both groups were aligned. On the other hand, practitioners were more likely to claim interns were given meaningful work at their organization, and interns work on projects that have meaningful outcomes (see Table 1). Additionally, practitioners and educators differed in terms of whether organizations look for diversity; practitioners were more likely to say that organizations encourage applications from students with diverse backgrounds (see Table 1).

One of the most prominent debates concerning internships is whether they should be paid or not. Thirty-five percent of educators and practitioners said their interns are not paid. However, for those that are paid, the average pay was reported to be $13.51 USD an hour.

The expected number of hours per week for a standard semester is another important area to consider. Overall, there was a wide distribution of expected hours per week and total hours for an internship. When educators were asked an open-ended question about hours per week, or total hours that an intern should work over the course of an internship, hours per week ranged from a low of five to a high of 40 hours. The most common responses for hours per week are as follows:
- 20 hours per week (35.6%)
- 10 hours per week (12.6%)
- 15-20 hours per week (9.2%).

Other respondents provided total hours figures for the entire internship. Total hours ranged from a low of 40 to a high of 960. The most common total hours figures were:
- 120 hours (11.4%)
- 200 hours (9.2%)
- 500 hours (8.8%)
- 240 hours (7%)
- 300 hours (7%)
- 100 hours (6.1%).

In the 2016 Omnibus Survey, 37 percent of educators and practitioners reported their interns are hired after completing their internship. Seventeen percent of respondents said they do not hire their interns for employment after they complete their internship.

Recommendations

The chapter authors' recommendations for this current report are offered with the understanding that universities offer internships in different ways. The intention of this section is to review the recommended best practices discussed in this chapter for universities to use as their resources allow. CPRE encourages programs to follow these recommendations and incorporate them into their existing programs as much as they can. CPRE also re-emphasizes the importance of experiential learning through university programs for both the student and the profession.

- **All internships should be paid.** Paying interns will help set higher standards and value the quality of work given.

- **Organizations should assign interns to supervisors who practice public relations and who can routinely and clearly instruct interns.**

- **All internships should be assessed by the interns themselves and the on-site supervisors.** In the cases of internships for academic credit, the academic internship coordinator should assess whether learning objectives were met during the internship experience.

- **Academic units should have a designated internship coordinator for supervision.** When educators hold primary responsibility for coordinating internships, the work should be credited as part of the educator's normal workload.

- **Internships should be a required course in the core curriculum.** CPRE, as it did in 2006, still believes that the internship experience should be a required course in the public relations curriculum and programs should move resources to help ensure that all students can graduate with a substantial experience.

- **The internship course, like any other core course, should be regularly evaluated for its achievement of outcomes, currency and rigor.** Internship courses should be evaluated to measure improvement of learning outcomes over time.

- **Internship coordinators, students, and supervisors need to understand legal guidelines, standards, and requirements for students participating in internships.**

- **Students should complete prerequisites, such as certain core public relations courses, prior to taking an internship course if they are receiving academic credit.**

- **Internships provide great opportunities to diversify the profession** if there is an emphasis on involving a diverse group of students.

Future Research

While this report is an extension of CPRE's 1999 and 2006 studies and delves more into issues related to internships in the field from the student, academic institution and employers' perspectives, future CPRE research and academic scholarship concerning supervised internship experiences needs to acknowledge the eclectic nature and complexity of economic and societal issues that affect internship programs and the experience for public relations students. This includes critical concepts such as gender, social justice, sexual harassment, workers' rights including insurance and exploitation, assimilation, affinity groups and other related challenges such as class divide and skyrocketing student debt.

> "For internships to remain a skill-building and educational opportunity, student interns should be supervised by those who have the appropriate skills for a student pursuing a career in public relations."

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Appendix

Table 1
Agreement on Statements About Internships

	Educators	Practitioners
Organizations offering internships match interns to supervisors within the field	M = 3.65, SD = 1.04	M = 4.06; SD = 1.13
Supervisors adequately instruct and evaluate interns	M = 3.70, SD = 1.00	M = 4.04, SD = 1.06
Interns are given meaningful work	M = 4.03, SD = 1.09	M = 4.27, SD = 1.03
Interns work on projects that have meaningful outcomes	M = 3.72, SD = 1.06	M = 4.06, SD = 1.09
Organizations encourage applications from students with diverse backgrounds	M = 3.73, SD = 1.18	M = 4.34, SD = 1.05

Professional and Pre-Professional Organizations: Developing Career Skills Outside the Classroom

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Overview

Professional and pre-professional organizations are highly important to future practitioners. These organizations prepare students for their careers by providing an introduction to and understanding of the profession, as well as offering experiential learning and networking with other practitioners. Survey respondents indicated that they recognize the value of student involvement with professional and pre-professional organizations and practitioners indicated that involvement in these groups was a highly desirable trait. They highly rated involvement in (in order): student-run media, student-run public relations firms, public relations organizations, and overall campus involvement.

Educators and practitioners agree there are many benefits to student involvement in public relations organizations. Educators indicated the top three benefits were networking, gaining knowledge of the industry, and professional development, while practitioners indicated the top benefits were networking, access to information about internship opportunities, and professional development.

Public relations programs should provide ways for students to become involved, whether through a student firm, the school's campus chapter of PRSSA, or another group or an internship program. Additionally, if practitioners want students to have this involvement, they should be willing to commit resources to developing programs and partnerships with educators and public relations students.

Introduction

Professional and pre-professional organizations provide students with an introduction and understanding of the public relations profession. Organizations also offer experiential learning and association with practitioners, thereby enhancing students' career preparation beyond their degree programs and their work in the classroom. Given the popularity of student involvement in professional and pre-professional organizations, CPRE sought to investigate their relevance and efficacy relative to career preparation.

Organizations such as the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) attract student members to a variety of career-related activities, which can include extracurricular seminars and training sessions, shared activities and events with working practitioners, and working in student-run firms and on-campus media outlets.

This chapter provides an overview of these organizations as well as results from the 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey used in this report about their impact from educators and practitioners. Our survey asked respondents if student involvement in these and related organizations delivered the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) employers are seeking in job candidates and asked respondents to prioritize the benefits of the students' involvement. The survey included both educators and practitioners to determine alignment and differences with priorities in higher education and in the profession.

The dimensions explored in the survey of desirable characteristics of applicants for entry-level staff positions included campus involvement, activity in student media, participation in student-run firms, and involvement in public relations organizations (such as PRSSA). As for benefits of engagement in student public relations organizations, the dimensions explored were networking, internships, career counseling/jobs, mentoring, having multicultural perspectives, and professional development.

Background on Professional and Pre-Professional Organizations

The industry has many organizations serving students and public relations practitioners, including organizations that focus on industry-specific subspecialties—healthcare, finance, hospitality, sports, entertainment and nonprofit industries—and those serving diverse audiences—ColorComm, the National Black Public Relations Society, and the Hispanic Public Relations Association. There are also organizations serving a specific geography—the Florida Public Relations Association, the Southern Public Relations Federation, and New York Women in Communications.

The two most prominent national professional organizations for student involvement in public relations are PRSSA and IABC. PRSSA, the student organization that is part of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), consists of more than 10,000 students and advisers in 300-plus chapters located in the United States, Argentina, Colombia, and Peru. PRSA itself has more than 21,000 members. PRSSA has its own board of students who manage the organization, with their own bylaws and budget. The student leaders manage their own programs and membership activities, with support from PRSA staff.

In their latest available quarterly report (January-March 2016), IABC reports 10,000+ members in 80 countries. This number includes their student membership. Although there are separate student chapters, the organization does not have a separately managed organization for student members at the international/national level. IABC has 13,000 total members, including a student membership category. However, only a few student chapters are listed on the student application.

Additional examples include the National Investor Relations Institute, which offers student membership for those interested in investor relations and finance; it has more than 3,300 professional members. Outside of corporate settings, groups such as the National Association of Government Communicators and Entertainment Publicists Professional Society offer student membership for specific industry sectors.

Focusing on multicultural communications, the National Black Public Relations Society has more than 500 members and offers student membership and mentoring. Given the large proportion of female students majoring in

public relations nationally, the Organization of American Women in Public Relations provides student membership as well, with a mission "dedicated to advancing women in public relations."

Internationally, there are opportunities for student membership in professional public relations associations that go beyond the United States. These include the Norwegian Communication Association, Professional Council of Public Relations of Argentina, the Middle East Public Relations Association, Council of Public Relations Pakistan, and the Public Relations Institute of Australia. The International Public Relations Association and Global Alliance also offer worldwide membership and networking opportunities that are not confined to one country or region.

Below is a sample list of public relations organizations divided by geography, industry-specific, and multicultural/diverse stakeholders. This list is by no means comprehensive. Rather, it offers a brief overview of the variety of professional organizations that help students in public relations, with some having student-centric products and services.

> "Educators are looking to professional associations to increase the student's understanding of the public relations industry."

Geographic:
- California Association of Public Information Officials: www.capio.org
- Florida Public Relations Association: www.fpra.org
- International Association of Business Communicators: www.iabc.com
- International Public Relations Association: www.ipra.org
- Maine PR Council: www.meprcouncil.org
- New York Women in Communications: www.nywici.org
- Public Relations Society of America: www.prsa.org
- Public Relations Student Society of America: www.prssa.org
- Southern Public Relations Federation: www.sprf.org
- Washington Women in Public Relations: www.wwpr.org

Industry-Specific:
- Automotive Public Relations Council—www.oesa.org
- National Association of Government Communicators: www.nagc.com
- National Investor Relations Institute: www.niri.org
- National School Public Relations Association: www.nspra.org
- Religious Communicators Council: www.religioncommunicators.org
- Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development: www.shsmd.org

Multicultural/Diverse Stakeholders
- Asociacion de Relacionistas Profesionales de Puerto Rico
- Association for Women in Communications: www.womcom.org
- ColorComm: www.colorcommnetwork.com
- Hispanic Public Relations Association: www.hpra-usa.org
- National Black Public Relations Society: www.nbprs.org

Opportunities for Students: Student Entry-Level Certification

New graduates of undergraduate public relations programs in the United States can earn an entry-level Certificate in Principles of Public Relations from the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB).

Established in 2013, the UAB certificate provides third-party validation that public relations graduates have mastered knowledge, skills, and abilities in eight areas: (1) researching, planning, implementing, and evaluating public relations programs, (2) communication theories and models, (3) media relations, (4) ethics and law, (5) using information technology, (6) business literacy, (7) history and current issues in public relations, and (8) crisis communication.

Students must pass a two-hour, computer-based examination to earn the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations. To be eligible for the exam, students must be within six months of graduation (before or after), be a member of a UAB participating organization, and participate in an in-person or online preparatory course. A faculty member must validate that each student applying for the certificate exam meets these requirements. Nearly 200 students from at least 23 universities earned the entry-level certificate between 2013 and 2016.

Also the Global Communication Certification Council (GCCC) expects to launch an entry-level certificate in 2019.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Turning to the 2016 Omnibus Survey data, practitioners indicated that the most "highly desired" traits when hiring students were involvement in activity in student-run media (58%), student-run public relations firms (55%), and public relations organizations (49%), as well as campus involvement (43%). Clearly they place a priority on experiential learning and student immersion.

Survey data indicated students were most likely to be involved campus activities in general (48%), in public relations organizations (54%), in student-run public relations firms (19%), and in student-run media (17%). The activities the students are involved in are in reverse order in terms of what the practitioners recommend.

Sharing the data about what involvement practitioners value can help the students evaluate their decisions.

The benefits of student involvement in public relations associations were also explored in the survey. The top three benefits for students entering the profession, according to educators, were networking (91%), knowledge of professional issues/trends (86%), and professional development (84%). In comparison, practitioners rated networking (85%), internships (81%), and professional development (83%) as the most valuable benefits.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Educators are looking to professional associations to increase the student's understanding of the public relations industry. They look to student involvement in these organizations to increase networking, knowledge, and professional development. These, for the most part, will assist students in finding jobs and integrating into the workforce. Practitioners, on the other hand, are looking for ways in which students can leverage professional associations to obtain more relevant, hands-on experience, including opportunities for internships.

Therefore, chapter authors recommend the following actions:

- **Academic institutions should provide exposure to the industry outside of the classroom for students, with as many opportunities as possible**. This can include student-run media or public relations firms, organizations on and off campus, etc.

- **Practitioners should proactively seek out partnerships with academic institutions to help provide students with hands-on experience.** For example, representatives from a firm or organization could host a lecture series, speak in classes, or support on-campus student public relations firms.

- **Public relations programs should start student chapters of professional organizations such as PRSSA or IABC.** To best prepare students to enter the workforce, academic institutions should provide students with the opportunity to become involved in some type of professional organization in addition to classroom learning.

- **Educators should actively encourage students aware of how to become involved in professional organizations on campus such as PRSSA or IABC, or in student-run media or firms, or other opportunities such as professional associations in the local community that may welcome students.** Whenever new students enter the public relations program, they should be told how to become involved. It should not be assumed that students know about professional organization or other opportunities, or understand the value of this experience to prospective employers and to their own professional development.

- **When eligible or qualified, entry-level practitioners should work to gain the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations.** This will display a standard of excellence for their degree programs and the industry as a whole.

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"The activities the students are involved in are in reverse order in terms of what practitioners recommend."

Diversity:
An Imperative Commitment for Educators and Practitioners

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Overview

The public relations field places great focus and value on diversity and inclusion (D&I) in practice and research, but there is still a great need to better implement D&I within the industry. The Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) recognizes that in order to see D&I within the public relations industry flourish, change must begin at the academic level through a more diverse student and educator base, and through changes in how D&I is taught at the educational level. This school-to-industry pipeline will result in a more diverse workforce.

While research has proven D&I to positively influence business results, it is highly important organizations do not view D&I as a commodity. This can hinder growth of diversity within an organization and lead to a dissatisfied workforce. Diversity should instead be an organizational value, and should aim to truly care for the diverse employee base. Trends and best practices emphasize the importance of diverse leadership, and the need for leadership to be heavily involved in D&I efforts—especially in regard to retention of diverse employees. The recent research finding that organizations should place the same level of attention, if not more, to retention rather than recruitment, came as a shock to many practitioners. Retention should be a top priority for those in the industry, because it will provide support to a diverse employee base.

Findings from the 2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey concluded that practitioners from ethnically and racially underrepresented groups consistently see the value in hiring diverse candidates more than their white peers. Findings also showed that practitioners value job candidates who enter the workforce and exhibit D&I-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), and who have a strong, multicultural professional lens. However, practitioners do not see that perspective reflected among the entry-level candidates to the extent they would prefer. Efforts to improve D&I knowledge must start at the academic level. We recommend educators place focus on how diversity and multicultural perspectives are taught in the classroom, and commit to integrating D&I focused topics and discussions in the curriculum.

Introduction

The 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond" provided several key diversity-focused mandates facing public relations education. The report recommended that public relations practitioners place a heightened emphasis on diversity, particularly the importance of keeping pace with diversity-specific changes among stakeholders; anticipating and responding better to social change; and developing successful managers who recognize the benefit of a diverse workforce. Accordingly, the report focused in part on the business case for diversity and argued that the public relations function must help convey the value of a diverse workforce. As the global economy grows, the public relations field has a direct role in helping build key relationships and tying diversity to enhanced creativity, productivity, efficiency, and overall competitiveness.

Trends and New Research Since 2006 Report

Since 2006, the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace has increased and become integral to everyday organizational life. Today, corporations and universities alike are expected to convey what they do to promote, enhance, and foster a diverse workforce. Accordingly, a growing number of organizations are hiring chief diversity officers who manage holistic diversity and inclusion programs and conduct industry research regarding best D&I practices. Moreover, while these companies have been aware for a generation of D&I's positive contributions to organizational operation and performance, they are now increasingly aware that D&I initiatives influence their reputation generally. Thomson Reuters, for example, in fall 2016 launched the Global Diversity & Inclusion Index, which measures and ranks the top 100 companies globally that manage effective D&I programs. Reuters said this new tool was "developed to help customers identify companies at the forefront of the D&I movement and support their investment decisions" (2016). Part of this index specifically analyzes corporate board diversity and researches the trends and best practices of corporate boards at 4,500 publicly listed companies (Chanavat & Ramsden, 2016). The report found that while gender diversity has improved since 2011, especially in Australian and European companies, cultural diversity has not. They

add that since 2011, the 100 highest-ranked D&I companies have outperformed Thomson Reuters financial benchmarks, as reflected by factors such as better return on equity, better profit margins, and higher dividend yields (p. 6).

Accordingly, there has been an increased focus on diversity in public relations and public relations research. And recent research by public relations societies and scholars has revealed five core trends and best practices specific to D&I.

- **The Central Role of Leadership:** As with Thomson Reuters' focus on corporate board diversity, this research has emphasized that the leadership team itself must reflect the diversity of an organization's internal and external stakeholders: they must resemble the communities they serve. Moreover, leaders must take an active, visible role in implementing D&I programs, and they must be held accountable to D&I program effectiveness.

- **Creating Support Structures:** The second core theme highlights the importance of providing a support structure for diverse internal stakeholders— by embedding and communicating D&I values across organizational culture and by implementing specific programmatic initiatives that help recruit, retain, and then promote diverse employees. These specific initiatives could be in the form of affinity groups, training, networking opportunities, and/or mentorship programs.

- **Identifying and Filling the Gaps:** Third, diversity in the public relations workplace has improved in recent years, but there is much still to be done. Accordingly, organizations also must understand emerging and intersecting types of diversity reflected in their internal and external stakeholders.

- **Moving Beyond the Business Case:** Finally, and perhaps most important, across public relations and organizational management research is a growing call to move beyond focusing only on the business case for diversity, which argues that a diverse organization leads to diverse and creative thinking, which in turn makes an organization nimbler and more competitive and ultimately helps the bottom line. This rationale, which was emphasized in the 2006 CPRE Report, has merit, but in the process positions diversity as a commodity. As a result, there

can be a disconnect between recruiting a diverse employee base and truly caring for and valuing these employees once they are on the job. Public relations therefore has a heightened mandate to help create and convey cultural value for D&I to core stakeholders.

- **Connecting Organizational Diversity Value with Stakeholders:** Much of the work in public relations research has focused on creating a more diverse field, but the PR Coalition in 2005 also tasked the field with taking a leadership role in diversity generally. The public relations function must better address how to convey diversity value in everyday practice (Mundy, 2015).

Finally, while public relations educators and practitioners alike are called to lead in each of these areas, it is important to remember the particular responsibility educators have. Diversity is one of the central standards evaluated for program accreditation by both ACEJMC and PRSA's Certification in Education for Public Relations. Yet, conveying a program's D&I initiatives and successes, as well as how D&I-focused content is reflected in curriculum, can prove challenging. Accordingly, it is important for public relations programs to proactively address and plan for diversity-related content, as well as information about what they can expect while working in public relations and how to prepare to be successful. Moreover, it is essential that these programs also have plans for enrollment of diverse students, recruitment of diverse educators, and retention of both.

Special Emphasis: The Importance of Focusing on Retention

Several recent industry studies have continued to emphasize both the importance of diversity and the need for more progress on recruiting. The Institute for Public Relations with the support of Weber Shandwick, for example, recently published a study (December 2016) specifically focused on millennials' perspectives of D&I. The Institute found, in part, that 47% of millennials consider D&I an important factor in their job search—a much higher percentage compared to the generation X and baby boomer respondents. The study also found that only 44% of all employees feel their organization effectively communicates their D&I goals, programs, and initiatives.

Only 12% of the survey respondents strongly agreed that their organization did a good job in this regard.

A second 2016 study exploring Arthur W. Page Society members' perspectives regarding D&I also revealed continued gaps, with more than 55% indicating they were either dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with the level of diversity at their organization. The study also revealed that work is still needed in truly integrating D&I holistically into business strategies, and emphasized the importance of leadership in driving D&I efforts (Jiang, Ford, Long & Ballard, p. 13). A third study, by the National Black PR Society (BPRS) (2015), found black representation in public relations has improved, but much work remains. Similarly to the Page study, BPRS findings highlighted recruitment challenges, including the importance of leadership, and providing pathways to increase racial diversity among leadership (Ford & Brown, 2015).

While much work has focused on recruitment, a fourth study—completed in 2015 by Lynn Appelbaum and Frank Walton at the City College of New York (CCNY) and funded by the PRSA Foundation—delved into the issue of retention and identified it as equally (and possibly more) important than recruitment. The study, summarized below (Appelbaum, Walton & Southerland, 2015) was described as an "eye-opener" by industry leaders.

Young Multicultural Practitioners Report Workplace Challenges

The CCNY study, which examined the experiences of young multicultural practitioners who graduated between 2008 and 2014 and were working in the agency, corporate, not-for-profit, and government/NGO sectors, found that while the young practitioners felt that some progress had been made on recruiting, there were still significant barriers for them in the workplace—barriers that were affecting retention.

Through surveys and focus groups, respondents cited perceived racial bias and incidences of "micro-aggression"—a workplace that could potentially create a "revolving door" syndrome. As a result, respondents said they were likely to tell their friends, including those still on campus, that they might want to reconsider public relations as a career. Their responses highlighted the cyclical effect poor retention can have for public relations. In essence, the inability to retain ethnically and racially diverse employees could, in turn, create an inability to recruit diverse candidates in the first place. Given the progress

made in recruitment in recent years, the importance of retention comes squarely into focus.

While most respondents said they feel they can pursue success in their public relations careers without making race or ethnicity an issue, and they feel that their ethnic backgrounds and culture are valued in the workplace as a genuine asset, only 17% of young practitioners said the industry has been very successful in recruiting a diverse workforce, while 40% said the industry is not successful.

A meaningful gap in perception exists between employers and young practitioners regarding industry efforts to retain a diverse workforce.

- Seventy-nine percent of employers say the industry is *very* to *somewhat successful,* compared to only 67% of young practitioners.
- One third of young practitioners say the industry is *not successful* in retaining a diverse workforce, compared to only one fifth of employers.
- Only six percent of young practitioners and seven percent of employers think the PR industry is *very successful* in retention.

Workplace Environment—The Problem Area
Both black and Hispanic young practitioners reported incidents of perceived discrimination. The CCNY survey and focus group participants also detailed examples of what they perceived as daily workplace biases. Survey respondents reported that they:

- believe they have not been afforded the same opportunities in the public relations field as their white counterparts (56%);
- do not feel genuinely respected by colleagues (43%);
- believe they have to be more qualified than a white employee in the same situation (45%);
- believe that multicultural practitioners are put on "a slow-moving track" (44% say *frequently or often,* 43% *say sometimes);*
- believe they are not treated with genuine respect by colleagues (43%), and
- anecdotally report experiencing racial bias in the workplace.

"Public relations must help position D&I as a true organizational value and then convey that value to internal and external stakeholders."

These concerns not only influence the young practitioners themselves, but also their circles of influence. While the young Hispanic and black public relations practitioners said they are committed to their careers in public relations and 91% said they hope to be in their public relations career five years from now, a majority (54%) said they would offer caveats rather than recommending public relations unreservedly. Specifically, they said they would want to provide advice and share concerns with about what they have encountered being black or Hispanic in the public relations field.

Study authors summarized that while there is perceived progress in terms of recruitment,

> Once practitioners enter the workplace, there is an apparent lack of support compounded by perceived biases that can negatively impact the success of multicultural practitioners, especially African Americans. We need to rethink how to successfully retain talented practitioners, especially multicultural professionals, and how their experiences will affect our ongoing ability to recruit. Many say they would share their concerns about how being African American or Hispanic has affected their career with the students who are following them into the workforce. Since today's young adults are in constant contact with their peers, their social media 'word of mouth' feedback can impact perceptions of PR as a desirable career for multicultural professionals and negatively impact future talent pools for industry recruitment efforts.

Additional research and discussions among practitioners and educators should be directed at finding ways both to address the workplace environment issues and to help educators find ways to help make sure that graduates are prepared to deal with any situations they should encounter. These efforts could have a positive impact in terms of retaining the young grads that are being recruited and on their comfort levels at recommending public relations as a career.

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

Given these diversity-related workplace trends—the growing focus on D&I across the industry, coupled with public relations' heightened mandate to lead the D&I discussion—it was important to tease out educator and practitioner perspectives regarding the role diversity plays in public relations education and preparing future

public relations practitioners. The 2016 Omnibus Survey provided several important insights that prove particularly instructive for addressing diversity and inclusion in public relations education. Ultimately, the survey provides three main findings:

1. Enhancing diversity in the PR pipeline: Diversity of public relations must improve. Employers indicated they value diverse candidates but do not see a diverse pool of candidates. Change—to a great extent—must begin with diverse public relations majors. Starting at the university level, there is a need to better recruit (and retain) diverse students. In turn, this will contribute to creating a more diverse field.

2. Creating value and understanding: Educators and practitioners alike indicated they highly value D&I-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Accordingly, practitioners value job candidates who enter the workforce with a strong, multicultural professional lens, yet they do not see that perspective reflected among entry-level candidates to the extent they would like.

3. The value of diversity: While practitioners and educators agreed generally regarding the importance of creating a more diverse field, and the importance of better equipping new practitioners with a multicultural lens, there were consistent differences depending on the gender as well as racial and ethnic background of the practitioner or educator. Women, and those from underrepresented groups, appear to value diversity more highly.

Creating Value and Understanding While Enhancing Diversity in PR

First, and perhaps most important, educators and practitioners fundamentally agree that diversity and inclusion-specific KSAs are desired for entry-level PR positions, though practitioners rated those KSAs as slightly more important than educators did (see Table 1). Despite this fundamental agreement, however, the survey also indicated several key takeaways that suggest potential gaps when it comes to diversity and diverse perspectives among new hires in the public relations workplace. Survey findings showed that while employers value diverse candidates coming out of school, they reported not seeing diversity in the candidate pool (see Table 2). Similarly, practitioners indicated that they value candidates who demonstrate a multicultural perspective, but also indicated that they are not seeing that perspective

reflected among entry-level candidates to the extent they would like (see Table 2). These first two takeaways suggest that work needs to be done in terms of creating a more diverse school-to-workplace pipeline, as well as enhancing public relations education that emphasizes multicultural insight. Finally, there seems to be a potential disconnect regarding the extent to which organizations encourage internship applications from diverse candidates. While practitioners indicated they actively seek diverse job candidates, educators did not necessarily agree (see Table 1). That said, the deviation between responses for this one question indicated a wide range of perspectives that might not make such a conclusion clear cut.

The Value of Diversity

In the process of analyzing the diversity-specific data, it was also important to get a sense of whether there were trends specific to the gender, ethnicity, or race of the respondents themselves; and several findings suggest potential differences between male and female survey respondents. Among practitioners, women felt having diverse candidates was more important than men (see Table 3.1). Similarly, when educators were asked about the importance of diversity and inclusion-specific KSAs, there was a significant effect for gender, with male educators providing a lower mean score than female educators (see Table 3.2). Regarding the question asking how actively organizations recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds, among educators there again was a significant difference between male and female perspectives, with female educators providing a lower mean rating than male educators (see Table 3). Finally, when comparing the perspectives of ethnically and racially diverse respondents with white/Caucasian respondents, one finding stood out. To put it simply—practitioners from ethnically and racially underrepresented groups consistently see the value in hiring diverse candidates more than their white peers (see Table 3.1).

Recommendations

Moving Forward: Seven Calls to Action
The 2016 Omnibus Survey findings, coupled with the findings from additional diversity-focused research conducted recently, outline several key mandates for public relations practitioners and educators as we move forward:

- **Focus on leadership:** Our leaders must set the tone for D&I initiatives, and they must be visibly involved. As industry has shown, however, they also must be held accountable for success, whether that accountability is tied to measurable outputs related to recruitment, retention, and engagement, or tied directly to compensation. Leadership in public relations education requires proactive planning in terms of D&I-related program goals. Moreover—reflective of the ACEJMC and PRSA CEPR focus on diversity and the expectations of employers and industry leaders—PR programs must be able to tangibly account for their D&I initiatives and success therein.

- **Focus on support:** Public relations must find ways to better support underrepresented groups, by providing paths to leadership while understanding and addressing their unique perspectives and concerns. From the practitioner perspective, it is important to create welcoming environments that include support mechanisms such as networking events and formal mentoring, and it is important to share these best practices across the industry. Accordingly, educators must do a better job connecting research with employers to ensure they are aware not only of these best practices, but also of the challenges young practitioners from underrepresented groups face. Moreover, this support must begin in college; our communication programs must identify ways beyond the classroom to ensure that underrepresented student voices are heard and their expectations addressed. Some programs, for example—such as the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication—have initiated student diversity advisory councils.

- **Focus on recruiting a diverse pool of candidates:** To a great degree, diversity begins on campus. The field still lags in recruiting underrepresented minorities, a challenge which—to a great extent—must be addressed first on campus, by creating a more diverse school-to-industry pipeline. While the field must find ways to diversify generally, public relations programs must do a better job recruiting, and then graduating, more diverse majors. Moreover, the profession must begin exploring the intersections of identity. In turn, companies of all size and levels of prominence must be in tune with the importance of a diverse candidate pool and be proactive in attracting these candidates as they graduate.

- **Focus on retention:** It is one thing to recruit a more diverse employee base, but it is equally important to retain them. As reflected in the "focus on support," organizations must develop programs that contribute to employee development. On campus, programs must determine best ways to support students from underrepresented groups. Too often, schools focus more on recruiting a diverse student body than supporting them once on campus. Retention requires leadership within an organization to be involved, willing to listen, and ready to act and make changes to best support and accommodate the needs of the diverse employee base.

- **Focus on teaching diversity and multicultural perspectives:** Diversity and inclusion and cultural perspective are inextricably related. Diversity and inclusion are instrumental to both internal stakeholder management and external communication, particularly in global campaigns. Cultural perspective can transcend organizational culture, societal culture, and individual culture. International organizations may face challenges across these types of culture, especially if the organizational culture does not completely fit with the local/societal culture of the host country and if people working for that organization are from a culture different from the host country and organization. Educators can foster the outcomes of diversity and inclusion and cultural perspective across the curriculum and in many ways. Educators can use global case studies and current event examples to teach students how to consider diversity, inclusion, and cultural perspectives when making public relations decisions.

  To deepen students' understanding and appreciation of diversity, educators can invite speakers from backgrounds that differ in terms of ethnicity, religion, and other demographic and psychographics dimensions. Students should be encouraged to join international student organizations on campus and to study abroad to deepen their appreciation of diverse culture and ways of thinking, so that they will be more prepared to enter careers in advertising and public relations that increasingly require that students connect with and engage stakeholders across the world.

- **Focus beyond the business case:** The field must take a leadership role in helping organizations to move beyond the business case for diversity. While that case builds buy-in, it risks viewing diversity as a commodity. Public relations must help position D&I as a true organizational value and then convey that value to internal and external stakeholders. The same is true for the practitioner and educator. There is real risk for corporations and colleges alike, for example, to recruit diverse employees simply to be able to claim diversity. The composition of every company, and every campus, is unique. We have a responsibility to value those differences and then help convey how those values shape the organization itself.

- **Focus on moving more quickly on all of the above:** Several studies have found that from the management perspective and practitioner perspective, we're moving too slowly. Now is the time to step up D&I efforts and lead the discussion. Public relations educators and practitioners have a heightened responsibility to do so as we serve as our organization's ethical conscience, forge key organization-public relationships, and prepare a new generation of leaders in one of the fastest-growing industries.

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"Respondents (to a survey of young multicultural practitioners) cited perceived racial bias and incidences of 'micro-aggression' – a workplace that could potentially create a revolving door syndrome."

Table 1
Importance of Diversity Within Job Candidates for Educators and Practitioners

	Educators M	Practitioners M
Diversity and inclusion-specific KSAs are desired for entry-level PR positions	3.89	3.95
Practitioners actively seek diverse job candidates	2.71	3.78

Note: Measures based on a 5-point scale

Table 2
Practitioners' Views on Diversity in Job Candidates

	Practitioners M
How important is diversity in a job candidate?	3.47
How often do you see diverse candidates as candidates?	2.64
To what level do you value candidates who demonstrate a multicultural perspective?	3.84
Is the level of multicultural perspective among entry-level candidates reflected to the extent you would like?	2.82

Note: Measures based on a 5-point scale

Table 3.1
Trends specific to the gender, ethnicity, or race of practitioner respondents when asked about the importance of having diverse candidates

	Practitioners Male M	Practitioners Female M	
Importance of having diverse candidates	3.18	3.54	T (405) = -2.94 p <.005
	White/Caucasian M	Racial/ethnic minority Female M	
Importance of having diverse candidates	2.71	3.78	T(402) = -2.12 p < .05

Table 3.2
Trends surrounding diversity specific to the gender, ethnicity, or race of educator

	Practitioners		
	Male M	Female M	
Importance of having diverse candidates	3.76	4.05	t(253) = -2.18, p < .05
How actively organizations recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds	3.08	2.51	t(248) = 2.295, p < .05

Global Perspectives on Public Relations Education: A Wide World of Opportunity

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Overview

As the industry of public relations continues to grow globally, so does the pursuit of a global standard for public relations curricula. Public relations practitioners and educators alike must work to exchange ideas and information with other practitioners internationally to help develop and define these global standards.

Trends currently shaping the teaching and practice of public relations globally include: increased momentum in professionalization of public relations; the critical importance of transparency and authenticity to build trust; the increasing number of public relations educators teaching, and students studying, outside their countries of origin; the need for flexibility and adaptability in an era of exceptional, unanticipated change; and the ever-growing list of skills and abilities needed to practice public relations successfully.

The Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) recommends that academic institutions—and more specifically the public relations programs within those institutions—place a primary focus on global interconnectedness and the opportunities it can provide the institution and public relations industry. Preparing students to enter the workforce with a global mindset is vital to the advancement of the profession.

Introduction

Public relations, now well established as a global professional pursuit, is shaped by the practitioners, scholar-educators, and students worldwide who apply universal principles of public relations in the interconnected world we all share.

This chapter provides insights on how that interconnected world impacts the practice of public relations and suggests how public relations should therefore be taught and studied at the undergraduate level. Clear commonalities exist within the global public relations community as do opportunities for standardizing public relations education worldwide despite many historical, cultural, and ideological differences. As context, students should be made aware of these macro global trends:

We are experiencing fundamental changes in people's trust—indeed, *mistrust*—in organizations and institutions. So ethics and transparency present premium elements in reputation management.

In addition, epic advances in technology are generating fundamental changes in how we will work. Indeed, the impending wave of increased automation and the use of artificial intelligence—AI—have the potential to affect the ways in which public relations will be practiced in Mumbai or in Milwaukee. Simply put, we are entering a second wave of the job automation process, which the World Economic Forum calls the fourth industrial revolution. Jobs may be changed dramatically, but AI may well reveal the value of human work.

And, significantly, the advent of social media is pushing the democratization of communication beyond the sole remit of organizations, corporations, and government. The shift from a paradigm of essentially one-way communication to many-way relationships with stakeholders continues to gain ground. Old fiefdoms of gatekeeping, message control, and monopoly of knowledge are breaking down throughout the world, albeit with different levels of commitment.

For practitioners in our profession of communication and relationship-building, these global trends give new meaning to the public relations remit In this evolving society, someone must still plan and curate conversations and decide with whom to react, with which communication resources, how often, and to what end. Technological innovation will not change that, but it promises new challenges as well as new support.

So how to prepare the public relations undergraduate for success and satisfaction is this roiling new era? It begins with research.

> **"Public relations students entering global society professionally should have developed an acute 'curiosity antenna,' in order to be receptive to and comfortable with the world's many variations of thought, action and effect."**

2016 CPRE Omnibus Survey Findings

The 2016 Omnibus Survey used in this report has served, in part, as a basis for this report's recommendations for global practice. But also important are recent trends and actions taken by various professional bodies to improve the standing of public relations. So, too, is previous research on *global* curriculum standards published in 2008 by CPRE and the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, as well as by the Global Alliance's recent work on the Global Body of Knowledge.

The framework developed for previous CPRE reports on global issues, recent global surveys such as the *2016 Global Communications Report*, the work on the *Melbourne Mandate*, and the *FuturePRoof* report have also influenced this report's recommendations.

Working Toward a Global Standard

The pursuit of a world standard for public relations curricula has proved to be a long-term proposition. In 2008 the Global Alliance partnered with CPRE to conduct research based on the findings of the Global Alliance's first research project to explore global curriculum standards. That research demonstrated a fundamental trait of the public relation profession: the increasing willingness of practitioners and educators to work across their "borders," professional and geographical, to redefine the practice and to continue to develop and test theories that encompass their respective missions.

One of the highlights of the Global Alliance's *Towards a Global Curriculum* is the conclusion that the evolving international society and economy requires a global perspective in public relations, with some standardization of shared practices worldwide that education can help develop. Practitioners could benefit from the extensive contributions to the body of knowledge from educator-researchers from around the world.

A 2010 follow-up study, *A First Look: Analysis of Global Public Relations Education—Curriculum and Instructors* (Toth & Aldoory, 2010), analyzed curricula in public relations posted on the websites of some 218 institutions in 39 countries on five continents. Using first-phase results, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with public relations educators in 20 of those countries.

The key findings of that study:

- Public relations is generally defined as a strategic function for building and maintaining relationships.
- Undergraduate programs are designed to prepare future practitioners.
- Curricula frequently reflect the five-course standard recommended in the 2006 CPRE Report "The Professional Bond."
- Important cultural distinctions are often embedded within programs.
- Barriers to development of "the ideal public relations program" include resources, systems of government and culture, program structure, and inadequate or ineffective relationships with practitioners.

These findings remain relevant to practice in the current global setting and beyond. Another recent research initiative already bearing fruit is the evolving *Global Capabilities and Body of Knowledge Project.* This Global Alliance initiative, launched in 2014, began with an in-depth analysis of 31 education and credential frameworks in public relations from throughout the world, noting commonalities and differences in knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors.

The resulting proposed *Global Capabilities and Body of Knowledge (GBOK)* framework can be used by professional bodies to adjust and update their credential schemes and educational frameworks for teaching in their countries. The interim "product" of the GBOK work is a list of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors (KSABs). Now in its last phase, the list of KSABs is being distilled within a capabilities approach that will allow greater flexibility of implementation. It is an instrument for transition from public relations education into the profession and is a significant development because it offers a potential "standard" for readiness at two levels of practice, early and mid-career.

Global Perspective of Public Relations: Now and in the Future

More than ever, the practice of public relations is now regarded as a strategic management function. Although this concept is aspirational in some parts of the world, the social purpose of public relations is also increasingly seen as a contributor to social harmony and understanding. Many attempts at forging a definition of public relations throughout the years have included the critical importance of working in the public interest.

Recent global efforts to describe the changing role of the profession include the *2012 Melbourne Mandate* and the *FuturePRoof* report. These two excellent reports reflect the current and future positioning of public relations practice and re-assert the public interest dimension of public relations' role in society.

That dimension has expanded significantly in the concept of public diplomacy. If public relations practitioners apply communication to the development and maintenance of reciprocal relationships, the application of that principle in international relations—literally, relationships between nations—would appear to be of paramount importance. In the state of international relations that exists as this report is being prepared—especially the rise of demagogic populism and the uprooting of many millions of refugees—application of such public relations "soft power" should be the first option in resolving dangerous political conflicts.

Finally, on the public relations operational level, the ethical implications of likely technological advances are worthy of students' attention. The increased use of artificial intelligence is already affecting the practice of public relations. Software and algorithms can write complete and coherent content with minimal human intervention. Analysis of complex and lengthy documents that formerly took many hours is now possible in several minutes. "Big Data" can be mined and applied virtually instantly. Nor is creativity immune to such change. In a future world in which self-driving cars and trucks will not only be more efficient, but safer than human control, ethical challenges may become of paramount importance.

Global Factors Affecting Public Relations

Cultural Values and Beliefs Affecting Public Relations
Some general principles of public relations 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 that have been established and/or promoted by global professional associations. These aspects of excellent public relations can be found in all parts of the world.

However, the application of public relations varies by culture and by socio-economic and political systems. At the same time, public relations can be a factor in changing a society. For example, attitudes toward women and their socially approved roles are markers for the context of the local practice. But women in public relations are increasingly playing important roles in fundamental social change in these markets—and, of course, around the world.

A corollary consideration: now, as never before, public relations 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, and economic systems. The result is a host of international issues affecting strategic public relations, namely: nationalism, populism, "fake news," transparency, authenticity, trust, capital flows, trade, immigration, epidemics, resource depletion, environmental protection, and educational opportunity.

Laws, Public Policies, and Innovation Affecting Public Relations
Country-specific regulations deal with issues such as corrupt foreign practices, freedom of information, anti-terrorism, corporate disclosure, and private citizen surveillance, each within national perspectives. All such directives need professional analysis and ongoing review. Students should be made aware that the chief public relations officer, as a steward of the organization's reputation, has the responsibility to see to it that the organization meets and, where possible, exceeds these strictures.

On a broader level, the growing influence of the United Nations Global Compact provides a voluntary framework to guide the conduct of corporations and organizations, with the goal of sustainable decision-making and improving society. Communication of progressive action is key to the success of such corporate social responsibility.

Additionally, technological innovation will bring special obligations for organizations to conform to evolving social mandates. Public relations education must confront this new reality.

External Groups, Organizations, and Associations Affecting Public Relations

Expertise in international communication is now increasingly available to educators and practitioners through professional conferences, workshops, web-based seminars, blogs, and mobile applications.

Issues originating in one part of the world can metastasize internationally via Internet, demanding global crisis communication management. But on the flip side, cooperation for progress—example: corporate social responsibility (CSR)—often involves international and multicultural stakeholders. Stewardship of this function is increasingly being assigned to the public relations function.

Campus attention to such external forces impacting the profession should also include the potential impact of government. This varies, of course, from authoritarian regimes to democracies. In the former, control of resources, curriculum, and free speech is total. In the latter, liberal governing philosophies make such restrictions the exception rather than the rule.

College/University Factors Affecting Public Relations Education and Practice

The best programs outside North America stress classes in liberal arts and social sciences, with an emphasis on psychology, political science, marketing and management. Public relations schools-of-thought outside of North America 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.

The placement of the public relations programs within a specific department of a school varies greatly around the world. In North America and Western Europe, traditional public relations programs are housed in or near journalism and/or mass communication schools. Elsewhere, as more departments and schools are eager to benefit from lucrative opportunities to teach public relations, the placement of the programs often reflects the aggressive leadership of various departments. Consequently, some public relations programs outside the United States are being developed and housed in non-journalism, non-communication departments such as history, political science or sociology. Each of those programs is grounded in the theories and practices of the home discipline and science.

The academic "home" for the public relations program is evolving in other ways as well. An increasing number of programs are breaking down campus "funnels" and "turf," offering courses or minors in subjects in which public relations is actually practiced—business, finance, healthcare, government and non-profit organizations.

College/University Small Group Factors Affecting Public Relations

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

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 profession 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 from these and other countries, the educators sometimes bring back new perspectives of public relations theory, research, and tactics.

Educators and practitioners involved in international professional organizations and attending international and regional research and professional development conferences also greatly influence globalization of public relations curricula and the status of the profession worldwide.

Intrapersonal Factors and Individual Traits Affecting Public Relations

Advertising, marketing, and public relations campaigns are shaping a global "mediated self." 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 yet a challenge for educators and practitioners alike.

Cultural identity affects how an individual recognizes problems, perceives his or her level of involvement in a situation, and processes information. 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. They vary considerably in the world's regions. Public relations students entering global society professionally should thus have developed an acute "curiosity antenna" in order to be receptive to—and comfortable with—the world's many variations of thought, action, and effect.
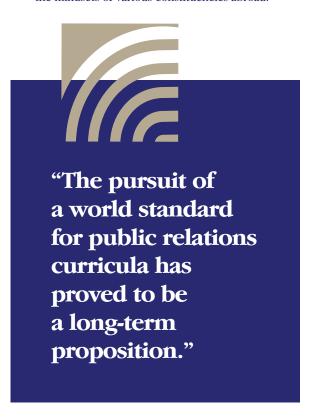
Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented by the chapter authors in the framework of the aforementioned major social factors that can have significant impact on global public relations education and the practice.

Academic institutions should:

- **Place importance on global interconnectedness.** Academic institutions should recognize that global interconnectedness represents an epic opportunity for public relations education and their institutions.

- **Increase the international exchange of ideas between public relations practitioners.** Practitioners and educators should increase the international exchange of ideas across various cultures. Increased commitment to international networks and institutions will accelerate mutual understanding and educational rapprochement.

- **Increase educator-administration dialogue about the global significance of public relations.** Increased educator-administration dialogue can help achieve a higher appreciation of the importance of public relations education to the institution and the importance of public relations practice, globally.

- **Seek to create additional international accreditation programs.** More international accreditation programs would help facilitate the needed similarity in public relations education across borders.

- **Better educate students on global public relations.** Opportunities for introductory courses in global public relations can add to the student's readiness, regardless of program or specialty, for successful entry to the marketplace. Students need to learn that the practice differs somewhat throughout the world. Case studies from countries other than North America can be very instructive.

- **Promote and encourage international exchange programs.** Study abroad is a valuable component of a public relations degree, especially in understanding the mindsets of various constituencies abroad.

> "The pursuit of a world standard for public relations curricula has proved to be a long-term proposition."

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IN CONCLUSION
Fast Forward: A Mandate for Action

From the beginning, The Commission has been issuing reports with increasingly detailed calls for action since 1975.

And actions have been taken, most visibly, having the Commission's recommendations for core curricula adopted by the Public Relations Student Society of American (PRSSA) as the requirements for forming a PRSSA chapter on a campus, and also adopted by the PRSA Certification for Education in Public Relations program.

And that is important progress.

But is it enough?

When one reads the brief history of the Commission, included at the beginning of this report, one notes that when the Commission's very first report, "A Design for Public Relations Education," was published in 1975, one of the main concerns of the founding members of CPRE was that employers of that era felt the entry-level students they were hiring "can't write."

Flash forward to this report, with the same refrain. Writing skills remain a concern among practitioners who hire entry-level staff, and other issues persist.

There has of, of course, been progress in many, many areas. The authors of that first report were concerned that there were not enough programs teaching or offering majors in public relations. This year's report talks about what some see as an overabundance of programs, with shortages of qualified faculty and concerns about how students are being prepared (with definite concerns about online programs). And then, and now, educators and practitioners express the desire to have more dialogue, to work together to find the best ways to understand what practitioners who hire entry-level staff need, and the best ways to prepare students in and out of the classroom to be ready to meet those needs.

Change has happened; more is needed.

CALL TO ACTION:

It takes a village to make Fast Forward a reality. Join us!

Looking Forward

A review of the summary of the ten major recommendations from this report defines the CPRE agenda. The list of many more details is found at the conclusion of the Overview Chapter.

2017 Major Recommendations/Topline

1. The Commission continues to endorse the five-course minimum first recommended in 2006 ("The Professional Bond") and recommends the addition of a sixth course in ethics.

2. Related Curricular Recommendations:
   a. Public relations majors must have a liberal arts education.

   b. Writing must be a key part of every course. Writing is the core skill identified by survey respondents, and cannot be seen as an isolated ability, unrelated to other courses.

   c. We must recognize that theory is not only important, but also will always be a work in progress as the practice of public relations evolves continuously.

   d. Internships must be paid and there should be specific pre-requisite courses taken prior to beginning an internship.

   e. Extra-curricular and co-curricular involvement should be seen as an integral component for student development, with a particular focus on leadership skills.

3. Dialogue among industry, practitioners and educators must be sustained.

4. All faculty must be prepared to teach effectively AND to have experience or at least be exposed to the practice of public relations.

5. Educators and administrators must play a significant role in diversification of the public relations profession.

6. The Commission must take a leadership role in enhancing the perceived value of a degree in public relations.

7. The Commission must help educators enhance the presence and value of public relations programs and departments within universities.

8. With the growth of online delivery of public relations education, attention must be paid to specialized pedagogical training for online teaching, program quality control and assessment.

9. Since technology does not "stand still", educators and practitioners must stay current on emerging communication tools, platforms and other information.

10. There is a need to ensure that students learn that the practice of public relations differs throughout the world.

A number of chapter teams also identified several topics for more research and made additional recommendations at the conclusions of their chapters.

Action Steps

As with any set of recommendations, translating the recommended actions into actual activity relies on a number of variables. With past reports, the Commission spread the word widely to educators and practitioners, via associations, industry media and presentations.

That will be done this year, and we will be happy to present wherever we are invited.

The Commission is also committing to pursuing a number of projects related to making the recommendations reality, including:

- Additional research on teaching preparation and professional experience for faculty, including the role of adjunct faculty in the new "hybrid" faculty model;
- Addressing how to help public relations educators and programs prepare for adding the recommended sixth course, in public relations ethics;
- Continued work on addressing the challenges of online education;
- Identification of ways to address educators' unique role in making our profession more diverse;
- Determining how to assess uptake of the 2006 Commission recommendations and encourage attention to the 2017 recommendations;
- Taking on the Big W issue – WRITING;
- And most importantly, operationalizing ways to continue the industry-educator dialogue that began with the 2015 Summit, extending the approach to cities across the U.S. including campuses, and involving a broad spectrum of educational programs and practitioners representing the breadth of the profession.

More than 40 years after the 1975 report, we are addressing the same issues. It's time for aggressive action, and the Commission reaches out to organizations, associations, public relations programs, and individual practitioners and educators with a simple request: join us in making progress.

CALL TO ACTION: It takes a village to make Fast Forward a reality. Join us!

> "CPRE will do all that we can . . . to ensure that dialogue happens and becomes a commitment for public relations practitioners and educators."

> "Since the 2006 report was the last time undergraduate education was broadly addressed, and there have been so many changes in both practice and education, it was clearly time for a deep dive into this topic."

And from our chapter authors:

"The most-demanded KSAs are not knowledge areas, but skills and abilities, suggestive that the labor market is most concerned about what entry-level practitioners can do and produce."

"It is understood that adding a sixth course is a significant recommendation; CPRE believes adding a required course in ethics is an essential change."

"Curriculum must teach students how to write for every format, including the web."

" (There is) the need for more trained public relations practitioners for site visits and program evaluation to ensure recognized credentialing programs have the resources to meet greater demand."

"Another continuing challenge is recognition of the importance of public relations degree programs by universities."

"New, more relevant standards for hiring educators in public relations . . . (should) balance the relevance of public relations industry experience with that of academic experience."

"The majority of public relations educators and practitioners do not view an online degree as equal to a traditional face-to-face degree."

"All internships should be paid. Paying interns will help set higher standards and value the quality of work given."

"In short, research is the strategic foundation of modern public relations management."

"Educators are looking to professional associations to increase the student's understanding of the public relations industry."

"Public relations must help position diversity and inclusion as a true organizational value and then convey that value to internal and external stakeholders . . . Not just as part of the business case for diversity, but because it is the right thing to do."

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