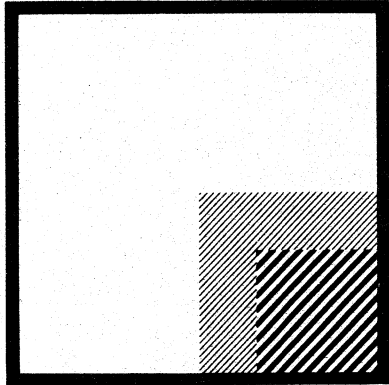


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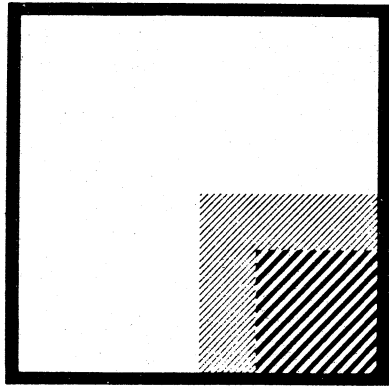
BY THE EDUCATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF
THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA



Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education

INCLUDING RESEARCH:

WHAT PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS
AND EDUCATORS SAY ABOUT PREPARING
STUDENTS FOR THE PRACTICE TODAY
AND TOMORROW



Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education

A Study Co-Sponsored by:

The Public Relations Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

The Public Relations Society of America

The Educators Section of PRSA

1987

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PUBLIC RELATIONS -- A STATEMENT

Public relations is a rapidly growing professional field in the United States. The Department of Labor reported that 143,000 people were in the practice in 1985 -- a 24 percent increase since 1975.

More than 160 colleges and universities have a public relations sequence or degree program. Sixty percent of the public relations sequences now rank first or second in sequence enrollments of journalism units. In 1985, public relations majors constituted about 13 percent of the 82,760 students enrolled in departments and schools of journalism.

By every measure the numbers are growing. More important, so are the role and influence of public relations in the private and public sectors.

Public relations is rooted in a democratic society where people have freedom to debate and to make decisions -- in the community, the marketplace, the home, the workplace and the voting booth. Private and public organizations depend on good relations with groups and individuals whose opinions, decisions and actions affect the vitality and survival of those organizations.

At its best, public relations is used by organizations to monitor the environment effectively, counsel on organizational policies and actions, direct and evaluate communications which are mutually beneficial to the organization and its publics.

At its best, the contemporary public relations practice offers significant opportunities for service to society.

INTRODUCTION

In late 1983, the Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education was established by the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and its Educators Section. During a three-year term (1984-86), the Commission was charged with developing and recommending a public relations program of study for undergraduate students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. The target for publication of its report was 1987.

The initial Commission to address the public relations curriculum had been formed in the early seventies. Its 1975 report, "Design for Public Relations Education," was a first in the field and a milestone for the growing profession. Co-chaired by the late J. Carroll Bateman, APR, past president of PRSA, and Professor Scott M. Cutlip, APR, now retired from the University of Georgia, that Commission also consisted of five other members representing the practice and education. The report made recommendations for both undergraduate and graduate education.

In the early eighties, a new Commission was established to update and provide a more detailed recommended curriculum for graduate education and its report was published in 1985. However, it was not until almost ten years after the first "Design" was published that extensive work on revising the recommended curriculum for undergraduate education began. That alone is testimony to the exceptional document which served public relations education and the practice so superbly for more than a decade.

The 1987 Commission recognized this. At its initial meeting in 1984, its first action was to reaffirm the recommendations of the 1975 "Design" until the report of the new Commission had been published. The pattern of membership for both Commissions was the same: representative of education and the practice. The co-chairs were an educator and practitioner, Dr. William P. Ehling, professor at Syracuse University, and Betsy Plank, APR, past president of PRSA. The key sponsoring organizations were also the same. The 1987 Commission also elected to retain the "Design" title for its report.

There were, however, some differences.

Unlike the 1975 Commission, the sole focus of the 1987 Commission was on the undergraduate curriculum. The 1975 Commission named specific public relations courses while the 1987 Commission addressed course content which should be covered in a total public relations program. Including ex officio members, the new Commission consisted of 26 members. Unlike the 1975 Commission, all were not exclusively members of AEJMC's Public Relations Division or PRSA. To seek as much professional consensus as possible, the new Commission included representatives from the International Association of Business Communicators and its Educators Academy; the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education; the American Marketing Association; the International Communication Association; the American Management Association and the Speech Communication Association. All of these organizations were identified as having a stake in public relations education, and indeed the active participation in Commission work by their representatives has confirmed that conviction.

Another significant difference was the initiative undertaken by the 1987 Commission to conduct research. Coordinated by Professor James W. Anderson, APR, a Commission member, and his associate at the University of Florida, Dr. Robert L. Kendall, APR, its purpose was to determine what educators and practitioners believed the content of an undergraduate education should be. Traditional wisdom had asserted that educators and practitioners disagreed about that content. The research results proved traditional wisdom wrong: today's educators and practitioners do agree about those areas of study necessary to prepare an undergraduate student for the present and future practice.

Commission members used that invaluable research as a grid against which to test their individual and collective experience and judgment. A public report on the research findings was presented at the PRSA conference in November 1985.

The Commission's work was conducted via frequent correspondence, telephone and six meetings, held in conjunction with the annual conferences of its sponsoring organizations and the International Communication Association.

The Commission refused to debate two commonplace questions: Can public relations be taught? And, in what department or school should public relations be taught?

The reality is that public relations is being taught. The Commission's concern was to improve the content of that education.

The reality is that most public relations programs are associated with schools or departments of journalism or mass communications. But programs are also taught in other schools or departments, e.g. speech, liberal arts, business. While the program of study outlined in this report relates to schools of journalism and mass communications, it can be adapted to any academic home.

Thus the content and integrity of the program were the priorities of the Commission and that steady focus prevailed throughout its three-year agenda.

The need for a new curriculum recommendation was prompted by the profession itself. A growing, dynamic field, the practice of public relations continues to defy definitions. As it matures, the practice continually flexes its muscles by reaching into new areas, using research and new technologies to renew and improve old patterns, learning more about the art of communications and assessing the compelling and frustrating condition called human behavior.

As the Commission's 1984 interim report stated, "From the viewpoint of today's practitioner, there are two key stakes in education for public relations. One is future employees. The other is the profession itself. One of the unequivocal hallmarks of every recognized, respected profession is a program of formal education."

The recommendations presented in this report seek to be a contribution to the mission of making undergraduate public relations education the best it can be.

*"An essential hallmark of a profession
is a program of formal education."*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- Research reveals virtual unanimity of opinion between practitioners and educators about what the content of undergraduate public relations education should be.
- Two subjects tied for highest ratings by practitioners and educators. For general education, English. For public relations, an internship/practicum/work-study program.
- The fundamental purpose of undergraduate public relations education is to provide the student with a well-rounded program of study, including an area of specialization called a public relations major. The traditional arts and sciences remain the solid basis for undergraduate education of public relations students, essential to their functioning professionally in a complex society.
- The Commission takes no stand on where -- the department or school -- a public relations program ought to be located in an institution of higher education. (The great majority of programs are associated with departments or schools of journalism and mass communications.)
- Wherever a program is located, these guidelines are addressed to the content and substance of that program and the ratio of professional courses to general education courses, particularly in the liberal arts and sciences.
- Of the credit hours required for a baccalaureate degree, a minimum of 54 percent should be secured in the liberal arts and sciences.
- The Commission recommends that public relations students, especially those planning to enter the corporate or agency world, give strong consideration to business as a secondary area of concentrated study, customarily called a "minor." (The business minor was also the leading recommendation by practitioners and educators responding to Commission research.)
- No more than 25 percent of the credit hours required for a baccalaureate degree should be secured through professional courses. Of this 25 percent, a minimum of half of the credit hours should be in courses clearly identifiable as public relations courses.
- The curriculum recommendations of the Commission are focused on course content, and not courses by specific name. How courses are configured is the prerogative of the educational institution. In the professional education courses for a public relations major, the content identified by the Commission should be covered.

CURRICULUM: Professional Education (25 percent of credit hours required for graduation)

Communications Studies (maximum of half of professional credit hours)

Technical/production: copy preparation and editing; graphic arts and typography; still photography; production for electronic media; public speaking and oral presentation.

Historical/institutional: history of public communications; law and ethics; problems and issues.

Communication process/structure: factors affecting the process or structure of communications; impact of the communication process or structure on other factors, e.g. social, psychological.

Public Relations Studies (minimum of half of professional credit hours)

Principles, practices, theory; emphasis on ethics.

Techniques: writing, message dissemination, media networks.

Research for planning and evaluation.

Strategy and implementation, including case studies.

Supervised internship/practicum/work-study.

Recommended: Specialized advance study, e.g. marketing, employee, financial, international, consumer, community relations; public affairs.

- . The public relations educator should have experience in public relations practice and university teaching and an advanced degree in public relations/communications, preferably at the doctoral level.
- . Public relations educators should continue professional development, e.g. research, writing, work in the practice, participation in professional organizations.
- . Administrative support has frequently not kept pace with the needs and numbers of today's public relations students. Too often, student-faculty ratios are too high; classes are overpopulated; students are thus shortchanged in getting a substantive education for public relations. The Commission recommends a faculty-student ratio of 1 to 15 for public relations writing and production courses and no more than 1 to 20 for upper-class public relations courses.

- Financial support from the practice to public relations education is inadequate. The Commission recommends that practitioners and their firms (1) make contributions to encourage stronger programs of public relations education and to influence more equitable administrative support of them; (2) commission public relations professors to conduct research and special projects.
- The relationships between the practice and education are growing stronger. Numerous productive dialogues and support systems have been forged by educators, practitioners, students, and their organizations and foundations. Many practitioners are serving as lecturers or adjunct professors. Increasingly, educators are contributing to research and literature and are being recognized as leaders in the profession. All means of such professional partnerships should be constantly strengthened to benefit the preparation for and the practice of public relations.

CURRICULUM RESEARCH

Asking practitioners and educators what they think should be taught to undergraduate public relations students is an innovation of this Commission.

In May 1985, 1,500 questionnaires were mailed to professionals. It was the most extensive survey ever conducted on undergraduate public relations education.

The questionnaires went to all public relations educators listed as members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), International Communication Association (ICA) and Speech Communication Association (SCA). They were also sent to a cross-section of leading practitioners, with appropriate representation from all major areas of practice.

Associate Members of PRSA were also surveyed. The Commission wanted to obtain reactions from those most likely to be in the younger generation -- thus closer to formal education -- and more likely to have studied public relations in college. Associate Members are also more likely to be closer to the "entry level" at which undergraduate public relations education is targeted.

Without follow-up mailings, the response of 544 questionnaires was 36.29 percent.

Each respondent was asked for value ratings on 124 courses, course-parts and topics considered to cover the scope of present-day undergraduate public relations education. The rating scale was from 1 to 7 -- from "not essential" at 1 to "most essential" at 7. Respondents were reminded that "educators must prepare students for their first jobs in public relations and also for lifetime careers of professional growth and performance and service to society."

The study yielded an enormous amount of detailed information which was of value to the Commission. There were interesting minor differences of opinion on some items among various respondent categories. However, of greatest significance was the finding of virtual unanimity of opinion between practitioners and educators about what the content of undergraduate public relations education should be.

Presented here are the overall means on the items listed under the general categories on the questionnaire.

LIBERAL ARTS AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Areas of liberal arts and general education were listed with the approximate number of courses most programs require in each area. Most are taken during the first three years of college. Here are the overall means for each item -- in order of importance -- as rated by respondents:

LIBERAL ARTS COURSES

- 6.67 English, three courses, at least two in composition
- 5.93 Economics
- 5.88 Humanities, at least three courses
- 5.85 Behavioral Science
- 5.64 Political Science
- 5.37 History, at least two courses
- 5.23 Sociology
- 4.94 Mathematics, at least two courses
- 4.06 Geography
- 3.81 Physical and Biological Science, three courses

FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORE COURSES FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS

As one way of qualifying students for admission to public relations studies, some institutions have various pre-professional or freshman/sophomore requirements. Respondents rated four such items as follows:

- 6.40 Writing for Mass Communication
- 5.88 Public Speaking
- 5.29 The Language of Business -- the equivalent of two semesters of intensive study (a choice of Accounting, Statistics and/or Computer Science courses) as an alternative to Foreign Language
- 4.22 Foreign Language -- the equivalent of two semesters of intensive study -- as an alternative to The Language of Business

MINORS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS

To provide public relations students with a strength in a second area, some schools require a minor, or secondary concentration of study. For such a minor, this was the rating of the respondents:

- 6.36 Business
- 5.56 English
- 4.94 Social Science
- 4.91 Psychology
- 4.82 Speech
- 4.72 Political Science
- 4.32 Computer Science

KEY COURSES IN A BUSINESS MINOR

Traditionally, the most popular (and recommended) minor for public relations students has been business. Respondents were, therefore, asked to rate the relative values of key business courses for public relations majors:

- 6.54 Marketing
- 6.19 Management
- 5.66 Business Economics
- 5.08 Finance
- 4.78 Computer Science
- 4.75 Business Law
- 4.47 Statistics
- 4.42 Accounting
- 4.17 Production

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Respondents indicated the values of courses in various disciplines related to public relations (such courses are normally available in the same colleges or departments as public relations courses):

COURSES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS-RELATED DISCIPLINES

- 6.43 Journalism
- 5.81 Radio/TV/Videotape Production
- 5.74 Advertising
- 5.20 Mass Communication Law
- 4.85 Art/Design/Graphics
- 4.65 Photography
- 4.15 Videotex (Electronic Newspapers)

PUBLIC RELATIONS -- CONTENT OF COURSES

For public relations education per se, the research group decided that what the Commission needed were value judgments on course content. To merely suggest course names and list credit hours would be meaningless. This was because of the myriad range of interpretations between educators and their various institutions. The problem of what, specifically, to include was solved by synthesizing the tables of contents of seven leading public relations textbooks. This material was organized under logical headings, and with each, the ratings of the respondents are shown:

ORIGINS AND PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

- 6.27 Nature and Role of Public Relations: Definitions
- 6.10 Societal Forces Affecting Public Relations
- 4.87 History of Public Relations

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS FIELD

- 6.00 Duties of Public Relations Practitioners
- 5.53 Career-long Professional Development
- 5.53 The Public Relations Department
- 5.45 The Public Relations Counseling Firm
- 5.21 Qualifications, Education and Training Needed

PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIZATIONS

- 6.43 Publicity and Media Relations
- 6.01 Community Relations
- 6.00 Employee Relations
- 5.71 Consumer Relations
- 5.29 Financial/Shareholder Relations
- 5.26 Public Affairs/Lobbying
- 4.93 Fund-raising/Membership Development
- 4.50 International Public Relations

PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH

- 6.12 Public Relations Research/Designs/
Processes/Techniques
- 5.92 Public Opinion Polling/Surveys
- 5.74 Fact-finding/Applied Research
- 5.47 Observation/Performance Measurement
- 5.43 Social Audits/Communications Audits/Employee Audits
- 5.40 Issue Tracking
- 5.27 Focused Interviews/Focus Groups
- 5.22 Use of External Research Services/Consultants
- 5.11 Media Analysis/Clippings Analysis
- 4.56 Historical Research

PUBLIC RELATIONS PLANNING

- 6.40 Setting Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics
- 6.15 Audience Segmentation
- 6.07 Problem/Opportunity Analysis
- 6.01 Budgeting
- 5.87 Contingency/Crisis/Disaster Planning
- 5.60 Issues Management
- 5.52 Timetables/Calendaring
- 5.37 Assigning Authority/Responsibility
- 5.34 Planning Theory/Techniques/Models
- 5.16 Organizational Background/Philosophy/Culture

PUBLIC RELATIONS ETHICS AND LAW

- 6.22 Ethics and Codes of Practice, Public Relations and
Other Professions
- 6.11 Credibility
- 5.91 Public Relations Law
- 5.20 Compliance, Regulatory Agencies, etc.

PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTION/IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.98 Campaigns
- 5.70 Continuing Programs -- Personnel, Safety, Suggestions, etc.
- 5.60 One-time Incidents/Crises/Situations
- 5.52 Individual Actions by Public Relations
- 5.33 Individual Actions by Employer or Client
- 5.11 Meetings/Workshops/Seminars/Conventions, etc.
- 5.08 Other Special Events

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMUNICATION

- 6.51 Planning, Writing, Producing and Delivering Print Communication to Audiences
- 6.27 Planning, Writing, Producing and Delivering Audiovisual, Electronic, Videotape and Multimedia Communication to Audiences
- 5.87 Employee/Internal Communication
- 5.78 New Public Relations Tools and Techniques
- 5.76 Message Strategy
- 5.71 Persuasion
- 5.68 Controlled (Advertising) Versus Uncontrolled (Publicity) Communication
- 5.62 Interpersonal Communication
- 5.52 Communication Theory/Concepts/Models
- 5.37 Layout and Graphics
- 5.28 Speech-writing/Speech-making/Speech Bureaus
- 5.12 Feedback Systems
- 4.84 Spokesperson Training
- 4.82 Propaganda
- 4.77 Photography and Film-making
- 4.66 Corporate/Graphics Identity
- 4.64 Working With Outside Suppliers

PUBLIC RELATIONS PERFORMANCE EVALUATION/MEASUREMENT

- 6.27 Measuring Program Effectiveness
- 6.13 Decision-making Based on Results (Planning)
- 6.12 Tools/Methods of Evaluation/Measurement
- 5.99 Setting Performance/Success Criteria
- 5.96 Reporting on Results of Public Relations Efforts
- 5.61 Measuring Staff/Public Relations Counsel Effectiveness

PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERNSHIP/PRACTICUM/WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

Approximately 66 percent of qualified public relations majors participate in internship programs of various types. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of this experience.

Practitioners with more than 13 years of experience rated the internship/practicum/work-study program at 6.48; educators, 6.66; practitioners with 13 years of experience or less, 6.79; PRSA Associate Members, at the younger end of the experience spectrum, rated it 6.96. **The overall rating was a resounding 6.67, tied with English as most highly recommended by survey respondents.**

Finally, respondents were invited to write brief statements indicating what the central purpose of undergraduate public relations should be. There were 334 responses. Many were thoughtful and profound. They testified eloquently to the growing self-respect for the societal role of public relations and the need for formal academic training essential to a profession.

The survey results were highly useful to the Commission in its work to develop a recommended undergraduate curriculum to prepare undergraduate students for a career in public relations. The Commission expresses its appreciation to all the educators and practitioners who participated in this watershed research.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS OF STUDY

Public relations -- its management and productive activities -- has a vital role in contemporary society. Therefore, formal education in public relations is essential to adequate preparation for a career in the field. Complementing professional training, formal education presents concepts and descriptions and defines appropriate standards of professional conduct to students who will shape the future practice.

The nature and consequence of the societal role of public relations are the foundation upon which public relations education must be built. This role entails working and serving within a milieu of complex interorganizational relationships, generating understanding, mediating the disagreements and controversies often arising from such relationships, and communicating ideas and knowledge that contribute to the clarification of public issues and debate. The purpose is to replace dissent and conflict with consensus and cooperation.

The Commission is aware of the growing popularity of public relations courses and programs in colleges and universities. It is aware of the continuous efforts of public relations organizations to establish high standards of practice and ethical behavior and to promote professional development programs for practitioners. It is aware that modern society increasingly uses advancing technologies which prompt the establishment of richer networks of interdependencies among organizations and varied social groups. In short, it is aware that the practice of public relations is expanding and changing in response to new needs and new opportunities.

All of this imposes a challenging and difficult burden on the public relations educator, whose task in the classroom is to help students understand public relations administration and practices.

The educator has the responsibility of giving conceptual content to public relations and, with it, a critical perspective of what activities and modes of conduct are to be legitimately associated with the technical and managerial spheres of action that compose the modern practice.

Faced with students who are seeking to grasp the structure and process of public relations as an organized and organizational activity, the educator must sort out what is conceptually clarifying from what is intellectually superficial, what is high professional performance from what is shoddy, what is ethically acceptable from what is not.

Not only is this conceptualizing activity a primary responsibility of public relations education, it is the ingredient which defines the goals of a public relations program of study.

Briefly, the responsibility of such study is to convey to undergraduate public relations majors:

- . the nature of a public relations activity;
- . the tasks and responsibilities of public relations management;
- . the various intellectual perspectives on which alternative concepts of public relations production and management are based; and
- . the operational and ethical standards that can be and should be used in determining which perspective is the most appropriate in practice.

These are goals from which, within the framework of a department or school, faculty can establish objectives and means of attaining them, including:

- . the number and types of courses that should make up the undergraduate public relations program;
- . the conceptual content and structure of these courses;
- . the type of emphasis and the standards of course evaluation; and
- . the nature of assessment used to judge student performance.

DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY

The nature of public relations activity is closely related to the various perspectives practitioners use to conceptualize public relations management. Together, they shape the way in which the functions of public relations practice are eventually put into operation.

For that reason, it is important educationally to look carefully at the nature of public relations activity. For many -- from textbook writers to practitioners -- it can be understood by providing a definition of public relations. These definitions range from the simple textbook variety to a full-page elaboration adopted by PRSA in 1982. (See Appendix 1.)

Definitions, of course, have their place. However, they may impede rather than facilitate understanding. This is particularly true when there are too many definitions, many of which never rise above an easy-to-remember slogan or a one-line description. Dictionaries do little to clarify the nature of public relations activity. They generally state that "public relations" is commonly used in three somewhat vague and inconsistent ways: as a relationship with those who constitute an organization's publics or constituents; as the ways and means used to achieve some kind of favorable relationship; as the quality or status of such relationships. One term, then, is used to label both means and ends, to name a condition, and to express conduct or action related to that condition.

The study of public relations activity begins logically with the social milieu in which organizations come into existence, sustain themselves and, not infrequently, disintegrate and disappear. It is in this social environment that interorganizational relationships and interaction patterns are forged, used, altered and defended. These relationships and patterns may result in understanding and agreement or tension and disagreement. They generate activities such as meetings, talks, arguments, bargaining or agreements -- as well as agreements to disagree.

Once such a social setting is understood, the institutional role of public relations becomes more apparent. Public relations functions help an organization understand its environment, identify threats and opportunities, and take actions to ensure its survival and growth.

Through and from such environments, various types of social groupings and coalitions -- sometimes loosely called "publics," "audiences," "constituents," or "stakeholders" -- arise. These various networks are not always easy to identify or locate. Even when they are, they must be carefully analyzed. Their actual or potential impact must be forecast.

This perspective justifies the need for public relations research, because it is research which provides the raw materials to be evaluated in the planning and policy-formulating stage of public relations management.

If public relations practice is to have substance, it must have (1) a functional role in an organization, and (2) clearly defined activities performed within that role. If the functional role and these activities are not correlated with the ever-changing patterns or interdependencies which affect an organization, the value of that organization's public relations is either diminished or immaterial.

From these premises, public relations activity may be derived, administered and put into operation. Thus, the primary content of public relations activity is a set of policies, actions and associated decisions that spells out the ends to be attained and the means to attain such ends. Essentially, these ends are to attain or maintain accord between an organization and those social units upon which it is dependent or, conversely, to reduce or eliminate actual or potential discord, conflict or dispute. The means to be used to attain or maintain those ends are performance and communication. A system of communication is a rich, complicated and long-term activity which entails a mutual exchange of information -- constant dialogue. It is never easy to establish or maintain. It requires a high degree of skill in environmental assessment, in negotiation, in joint program planning and in the appraisal of performance.

The nature of public relations activity is thus rooted in an empirical world of organizational environment and interaction where intercommunication is the primary means of attaining, maintaining or enhancing social accord. In turn, the goals of a public relations academic program are to convey this concept to students and to have them grasp the social, organizational, administrative and ethical implications of such a perspective.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM OF STUDY: OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of a public relations program of study are to:

1. Describe the state of the art and explain the current body of knowledge.
2. Identify, elaborate and integrate the defining concepts and theoretical schemes which can be appropriately used to give public relations practice intellectual content and ethical warranty. This can be done by appeal to four general theoretical areas: decision-making and management theory; theory of interorganizational relationships; communication theory; theory of conflict resolution.
3. Design, assemble and administer programs of study for undergraduate students, and organize faculty and staff resources to carry out the educational mission adequately.
4. Provide students with an understanding of (a) the professional and ethical problems confronting the public relations field and its individual practitioners; (b) the technical and strategic tasks and responsibilities of public relations practitioners; (c) the administrative-managerial role of public relations activity in various organizations and the social value of such activity to the operations, integrity and public acceptance of these organizations; (d) the social and cultural milieu in which public relations practitioners and their associated organizations must function.
5. Require undergraduate students in a public relations program to meet the standards for liberal arts and general education (including a secondary study emphasis, or minor, such as business) established by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. (ACEJMC is the sole agency authorized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council on Post-Secondary Education for accrediting programs of professional education in journalism and mass communications, including public relations, in U.S. institutions of higher education.)
6. Structure the sequence of public relations courses so that students may move progressively from underclass introductory courses to upper-class advanced courses in public relations.
7. Clarify the basic concepts associated with public relations management and differentiate public relations management from the technical tasks of public relations production. In concept and by performance, students must also be able to relate public relations management to other types of management activities such as marketing, human resources, industrial relations, finance, government relations and fund-raising. They must be able to understand how public relations management is associated with issues management, crisis management and conflict management.

8. Draw on critical concepts and on empirical models of public relations administration found in the private and public sectors and in profit and not-for-profit organizations to enable students to analyze and resolve ethical and management issues.

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS CURRICULUM: ASSUMPTIONS AND COMMITMENTS

The Commission's recommendations are based on a number of assumptions about the nature and purpose of undergraduate public relations education and on a number of commitments related to education in general and to accreditation in particular.

- The 1986 Commission reaffirms the belief of the 1975 Commission on Public Relations Education that the fundamental purpose of undergraduate public relations education leading to a bachelor's degree is to **provide the student with a well-rounded program of study, including an area of specialization called a public relations major.** (See "The Spirit of Liberal Education," Appendix 2.)
- The Commission reaffirms the belief of the 1975 Commission that while a bachelor's degree level program in public relations education may prepare students for their initial years of professional practice, those planning for a lifetime career in public relations should seek graduate education.
- The Commission subscribes to ACEJMC's "90-hour rule" which limits the number of course credits students can take in their major field of study. (See Appendix 3.) Based on a model of 120 credit hours required for graduation, the rule states that "students take a minimum of 90 semester hours in courses outside the major area of journalism and mass communications." Of these 90 hours, "no less than 65 semester hours" must be taken in basic "liberal arts and science courses." This means that when 120 semester hours are required for a baccalaureate degree, only 30 semester hours can be taken in a major area of professional study. (In percentages of the credit hours required for graduation: 54 percent in liberal arts and science; 21 percent in other general education; 25 percent in professional education.) The curricular recommendations of the Commission are to be interpreted within these accrediting guidelines established by ACEJMC.
- The Commission recognizes the key role that communication plays (or should play) in public relations practice. The Commission regards communication systems as a principal and appropriate means to be used by public relations practitioners to attain the ethical objectives which define the primary mission of the public relations enterprise.

Public relations undergraduates need to understand the nature, scope, structure, and dimensions of the complex, interactive and dynamic processes to which the term "communication" is applied in contemporary theory. Moreover, they must understand that such communication systems are jointly, not unilaterally, designed; are bidirectional, not unidirectional, in message dissemination; are designed to bring mutual benefits to participating parties, not shaped to have one party exploit the other.

This commitment calls upon both public relations educators and practitioners to repeatedly reexamine and justify their notions and rationale not only about the nature and process of communication in human affairs, but also about the role and design of such communication systems within the framework of public relations management and practices.

- The Commission is aware that many public relations programs are traditionally found in units (departments, schools or colleges) which operate under the general label of journalism and mass communications. However, public relations programs are also found in other units. The Commission takes no stand on where a public relations program ought to be located. It is concerned only with the substance of undergraduate public relations education and the ratio of professional courses to courses in liberal arts and general education.
- The Commission believes that public relations education should adopt procedures of periodic self-study and review. For public relations programs located in schools, colleges or departments of journalism or mass communications, the Commission recommends that the unit in which the program is taught seek examination for accreditation by ACEJMC.
- The Commission believes that to the extent a program of study is called a "public relations" sequence or a major, such a program should have at least 50 percent of the required credit hours in courses clearly identifiable as public relations courses. This means that their designation, course description and content should be distinguished from other required professional courses, e.g. general courses in communications and journalism.

In short, a public relations program of study (a so-called "major" in public relations) should be warranted. Such warranty is to be established by the credit hours and content of public relations courses included in the program. A sound, substantial undergraduate public relations program is not, for example, merely a journalism or communications program plus add-on public relations courses.

THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

From its beginning, public relations education encouraged a mix of professional training and liberal arts education. The belief was -- and is -- that the former would allow students to take their place in the public relations field upon graduation while the latter would provide the student with knowledge about the world in which public relations practice is to be conducted.

In a brief span of four years, undergraduate students must acquire formal knowledge about this world which has grown increasingly complex, interdependent, technological and threatening to individual liberty, well-being and integrity. As a result, professionally oriented college curricula are imposing increasing demands on students and faculty in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. This is especially true in curricula associated with journalism, mass communications, advertising and public relations. Such curricula, especially for public relations, require a sound and disciplined learning experience. Students must learn not only how to communicate but also what should be communicated and why it should be communicated.

The "how" of communication should include the basic skills of rhetorical composition and such stylistic variations as news reporting and script and feature writing. At the same time, these requirements must be transcended. The public relations curriculum must include instruction in message presentation (both oral and written) and message dissemination through institutionalized systems such as mass media, as well as through formal and informal interpersonal networks. Message utilization, in turn, includes uses that bring about information exchange, communicative dialogs and social transaction.

The "how" of communication also includes principles of management and strategic decision-making. The application of these principles, in turn, gives rise to the functions of management, including public relations management -- functions that entail conceptualizing the tasks and responsibilities of public relations communication, goal-setting, budgeting, program planning and design, program implementation and administration, and program evaluation.

The "what" and "why" of communication must also be viewed in broad terms. Inevitably, an understanding of "what" should be communicated and "why" pushes students outside of their major area of study into courses offered by arts and science. Such courses cover the humanistic area of philosophy (including ethics with its concern of right and wrong, good and bad), literature, language and the fine arts, as well as the social sciences (with their concern for an understanding of the factual nature of the sociocultural world and the individual's place in it) and the natural sciences (with their concern for grasping the nature of the physical, biological and ecological spheres of our universe).

These multiple demands call for a reasonable balance between courses in basic communication and message presentation and courses in liberal arts and other fields and disciplines found in institutions of higher learning. Within the public relations major, a balance is needed between courses emphasizing professionally oriented skills and instruction in the managerial skills involved in communication planning, implementation, integration and evaluation.

For a student majoring in public relations, the total program of study leading to a degree may be divided conveniently into (1) general education and (2) professional education.

I. GENERAL EDUCATION

The term "general education" applies to courses in the arts and sciences of the liberal arts curriculum and other fields and disciplines, e.g., business administration. The Commission recommends that a minimum of 65 semester hours of the student's course work required for graduation be in arts and science courses as specifically defined by the institution. This includes courses in English (including modern rhetoric and writing), the social sciences and history (sociology, anthropology, political science, economics), psychological and behavioral sciences, the humanities (philosophy, literature, fine arts, etc.), natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, geology, etc.), mathematics and foreign languages.

In their professional courses, students should also be exposed to issues and ideas grounded in the liberal arts. Specific social situations and social issues, questions of law and ethics, and matters of planning and programming within the reality of the social milieu should be examined and evaluated. **It should be remembered that public relations is itself a social science.**

Electives, Minors, Concentrations

Where there is opportunity within the framework of the student's public relations major to take additional courses under the rubric of electives, guidance should be provided by the adviser to have students elect courses which directly support their career objectives.

In many colleges and universities, the student can develop a secondary concentration of study, or a minor, outside of liberal arts units and in such units as schools or departments of business administration or management. The Commission recognizes that the most preferred minor or secondary concentration for public relations students is general business. The Commission's research showed that among educators, practitioners and students, the business areas given the highest rankings included marketing, management, business economics and finance, in that order.

Where opportunities for a minor exist, it is recommended that students, especially those planning to enter the corporate or agency world, give strong consideration to business as a secondary concentration or minor.

Depending on the student career plans following graduation, other areas might include public administration and political science (for students intending to obtain public relations jobs in government and/or politics) and educational administration (for those planning to become associated with educational institutions or systems, art museums or performing arts centers).

II. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Under the general label of professional education are found two areas of study: (1) communication (its structure, process and effect) and (2) public relations (practices at the technical, production level and practices at the strategic, managerial level).

The Commission recommends that no more than 25 percent of the credit hours required for graduation be designated as a professionally oriented area of study, that is, as a public relations major. For example, on a semester system requiring 120 credit hours for graduation, no more than 30 of those credit hours should be in professional education.

A. Studies in Communications

The field of communications, as noted earlier, is an exceedingly complex system. It cannot be adequately understood by students by merely having them focus on some discrete part of it. The Commission, of course, is mindful that undergraduate students cannot be expected to cover all facets of this vital human activity with complete thoroughness nor to completely master all of its dimensions.

However, the Commission also is aware that "communications" as a subject-matter field can be variously organized -- hierarchically, from the relatively simple parts to extremely complex systems; horizontally, ranging across activity sectors or spheres that include interpersonal, intraorganizational, interorganizational and institutional communication. At the same time, there also is a longitudinal dimension in which communication is spoken of as a process, defined as a function of time by which the operations of message construction, dissemination, utilization and exchange unfold temporally.

Thus a balance needs to be struck between instruction which focuses on some of the basic parts of the communication systems (such as news writing) and instruction which focuses on how the parts of communications are integrated, as well as the conditions under which the integrated whole allows persons, social groupings and organizations to advance social cooperation and coordination.

Students majoring in public relations should study the following subjects as courses or parts of courses:

1. Technical/Production

Copy Preparation and Editing. This area covers a broad range of activities including news and feature writing, advertising copywriting and writing for electronic media. Such activities are usually treated under principles of message presentation in such courses as news writing and reporting, copy editing, script writing and advertising principles and copywriting.

Graphic Arts and Typography. This area generally addresses the matters of the origin, kinds and uses of various printing and display processes, typeface classification and design, copy fitting and layout, color reproduction and the production and display of drawings, engravings, graphs, photographs and other representations in print and electronic media.

Still Photography. Included here are the techniques and processes utilized in the technologies that produce black-and-white and color prints or slides. Courses dealing with this area provide information about the origin, kinds and uses of photographic equipment, photography techniques and how the photographic products are integrated in a system of visual presentations.

Production for Electronic Media. These activities include writing for and the use of technologies to produce and disseminate radio, television and videotaped programs for commercial and public broadcasting, closed-circuit television and cable television, including satellite television. Courses in this area cover programming techniques, programming organizations and supporting hardware technologies.

Public Speaking and Oral Presentation. Included here are the general rules of rhetoric, their use and application in preparing and giving speeches, talks and other types of oral presentations. Courses related to this area usually provide students with message-organizing techniques and modes of oral delivery under varying social conditions. Their purposes are to make students aware of the importance of oral presentations and more confident in giving speeches on public occasions.

2. Historical/Institutional

This area of study covers the history of public communications, including the institutionalized areas of the mass media (newspaper, magazines, radio and television) as well as the sectors of public relations and advertising. In some cases, the history of public communications is covered in introductory courses in mass communications and society. In others, the histories of the various areas of specialization, e.g. advertising, news editorial, public relations, are presented separately or as a part of an introductory course in the specific area. In addition, areas of specialization have courses that deal with various institutional aspects such as the structure of the enterprise, corporation or agency, law and ethics regulating behavior in the public communications sector (including the practice of public relations), as well as problems, issues and criticisms associated with groups and organizations engaged in activities directing and affecting public communications.

3. Communication Process/Structure

In this area, the student's attention is directed to the nature of the communication activity itself. Such an activity can be viewed from several perspectives. The most common are those concerned with the process and structure of communication. Courses dealing with these aspects of communication are sometimes identified as "theory" courses, although much of the material used is based on empirical studies. Two broad types of

questions are addressed: What factors, say, social or cultural, affect the process or structure of communication? What impact does the communication process or structure have on, say, psychological or social factors? In general, the intent of courses dealing with these topics is to make students aware of the multidimensional aspects of communication and the complex interactional systems which emerge from communication activities.

B. Studies in Public Relations

Together with courses in communication-oriented subjects, studies in public relations make up the field of specialization. Educators and students must strive to construct a program of study that will prepare students to enter their field of interest -- usually at the level of technicians -- and to move to higher levels of responsibility in a relatively short period of time. Hence there is need for the student to distinguish between and be knowledgeable about both the technical-production level of public relations practice and the strategic-managerial level. To strike a reasonable balance between these different types of instruction, a number of public relations courses must be offered to the student.

A minimum of 50 percent of the student's credit hours in professional education should be in courses clearly identifiable as public relations courses. Of these public relations courses, about half should be production-oriented. The remaining half should be management-oriented (research, planning and evaluating).

The content of such public relations courses should include at least the following subject matter, distributed over a core curriculum equivalent to a minimum of 15 credit hours, based on 120 credit hours required for graduation, and customarily translating to five courses, each with three credit hours. Ideally, these should be taught at the upper-class (junior and senior) level. The content is categorized in five areas, with a sixth area for specialized advance study where possible.

1. Principles, Practices, and Theory of Public Relations

In this area, the primary focus is on management's critical areas of accountability: the conceptualization and specification of the tasks and responsibilities which define the nature, scope and warranty of public relations activity. Such tasks and responsibilities rest on a number of theoretical foundations, including, among others, communication theory, interorganizational theory, decision-making and management theory and conflict and conflict-resolution theory.

From such a foundation, the tasks of public relations activity can be derived and specified as a set of functions performed by those responsible for managing public relations activity. Such functions within the public relations context include the research and assessment of the organizational public relations environment, establishing public relations goals and objectives, selecting appropriate courses of communication action, implementing those communication programs and evaluating performance.

Such a course should be treated as a concepts course, not a skills or production course. Its role is to familiarize students with the background and content of public relations management, helping them understand the nature of managerial and ethical responsibilities of public relations practitioners. **Attention should be given to the codes of ethics and enforcement processes of national societies of public relations professionals.**

2. Public Relations Techniques: Writing, Message Dissemination and Media Networks

Here the focus is on skills and techniques that cover several closely associated areas such as writing for public relations, copy dissemination, media use and media network design. These techniques range across internal and external media, print, electronic and audiovisual media.

Although journalistic writing and advertising writing are sometimes seen as overlapping public relations writing, the latter is to be differentiated in terms of (1) the range of media used; (2) the multiple groups which have to be reached at the same time; (3) the social and organizational context in which public relations writing is done; and (4) the objectives to be attained by such writing. These objectives must be identified with the public relations mission to seek accord with various social groupings and organizations. In short, public relations writing employs a variety of styles, formats and message structures in fulfilling an organization's accord-seeking objectives.

Message dissemination systems are many and varied in their structure. They range from highly formalized and institutionalized systems, exemplified by the mass media system, to informal, interpersonal networks. It is these latter networks, in the form of face-to-face discussions and small group meetings, through which public relations activity is often carried out.

It is thus important for students to understand how the one-way dissemination systems usually associated with publicity techniques must be fit together with two-way interpersonal communication systems. This kind of knowledge sets public relations communication techniques apart from other types of written and oral presentations.

3. Public Relations Research for Planning and Evaluation

Public relations students need to know more than how to construct messages. They need to know the process of public relations research for planning and evaluating programs of action, including programs of communication.

To plan communication programs in support of an organization's action, there is a need to (1) identify and segment various social groupings (interest groups, stakeholders, coalitions) with whom messages are to be exchanged; (2) ascertain the impact of the action and information system on communication participants; and (3) evaluate the results of such action and communication activity against desired outcomes. Such research activities, when formalized, are regarded as essential to planning and part of evaluative research methodology.

Three types of evaluative research are relevant to public relations research. The first entails techniques for assessing the organization's environment, a process generally called environmental monitoring and evaluation. The second involves techniques for evaluating various courses of action available to the decision-maker -- in this case, the public relations executive -- to determine which course of action is most efficient and effective. Such activities are usually performed under the rubric of operations research. The third focuses on the performance of a program of action to see if it is attaining the sought-after goals or objectives. Such research is identified as performance evaluation.

These evaluative research methodologies make up a vital component of the managerial process. They are central to the activity called public relations management. Students need to know that public relations management entails much more than that of implementing programs of communication. It includes strategic and tactical planning and programming, and the validity of the latter is based on information derived from sound research.

Many of the techniques and methods of public relations research are similar to the methodologies used in social science research. The difference, however, between public relations research and social science research is that the former must always incorporate the methodologies of evaluative research. In other words, public relations research is not only fact-finding research, it is also evaluative research. Hence, standards (norms) of evaluation must be identified by the public relations researcher and utilized so that the findings are relevant for public relations decision-making.

4. Public Relations Strategy and Implementation

In this area, attention is directed at strategic planning and implementation as they pertain to public relations administration. Courses usually associated with this academic area include those which take the form of case studies of public relations campaign strategies. The general intent of such courses is to place the student in a managerial, decision-making role in which the primary requirement is to think in planning and program-execution terms.

There are two important aspects of this area of study. The first pertains to developing and applying criteria that allow the decision-maker (in this case, the student acting out the role of a decision-maker) to identify what constitutes a public relations program. The second covers the theory and norm to be used in making decisions, namely, the selection of strategies under varying kinds of information conditions.

Because different strategies are associated with different informational conditions, it is important for students to understand these associations and the formal methods which can be applied in strategy-selection. They also need to be able to apply these norms to public relations management which usually entails decision-making under risk and uncertainty.

Strategy-selection presupposes that the goals or outcomes for which the strategies are to be used have been well-formulated. Part of the exercise in strategy-selection is to engage the student in goal-setting -- the process of formulating goals which are ethically legitimate, administratively appropriate and practically attainable.

A case-method approach and a campaign-planning approach are among the several ways students can become familiar with the techniques of goal-setting and strategy-selection. In either case, the student can be introduced to the formal rules of strategy-selection, once goals have been specified, by appeals to the literature base covering the subjects of decision theory and management theory.

5. Supervised Public Relations Experience

Internship, practicum and cooperative studies are areas which allow students to gain practical experience by participating in on-site work situations with various types of public relations departments or organizations. Such hands-on experience, however, should have faculty supervision, be related to the classroom and, ideally, have on-site supervision by an experienced public relations practitioner. Of the hours required for graduation, no more than three credit hours should be obtained in these studies. (See Appendix 4.)

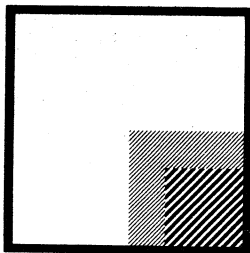
Whenever such experiences are formalized through credit-granting courses, students should be required (1) to meet in a classroom setting to discuss and evaluate their ongoing, on-site, hands-on activity under teacher supervision; (2) to carry out an in-depth analysis of an on-site public relations problem, formulate a plan for its resolution, indicate how much a plan is to be implemented and show the manner for evaluating the plan's implementation; (3) to support their on-site activities and classroom assignments with thorough library research and documentation.

The Commission underscores its conviction that supervised internship programs are one of the important facets of undergraduate education in which students have the opportunity and are given guidance to develop sound judgment in various kinds of public relations problem-solving situations.

6. Specialized Advanced Study

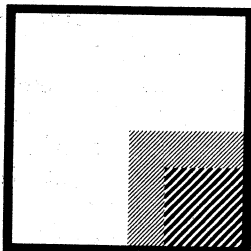
Where time and resources allow, specialized advanced study should be encouraged to give students an opportunity to become more familiar with the detailed ramifications of various subdivisions and levels of operation found within the framework of public relations administration. These include such activity sectors as marketing public relations, public affairs, publicity and media relations, community relations, international public relations, financial and shareholder relations, consumer relations, employee relations, fund-raising and membership development.

The Commission considers that substantially all of the foregoing content is needed for a complete undergraduate public relations program.



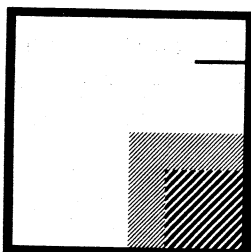
THE SYMBOL

Adopted by the Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education, this symbol visually summarizes the Commission's recommendations for the distribution of credit hours of study required for a public relations major.



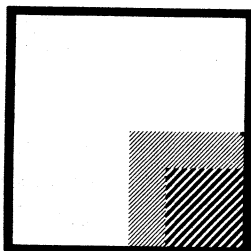
120 HOURS

This first, main square represents the minimum credit hours required for a bachelor's degree -- usually 120 hours attained during a four-year period.



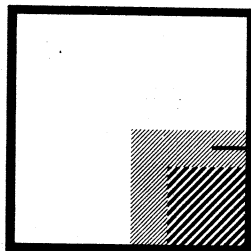
90 (65/25) HOURS

This white area represents courses in liberal arts (minimum of 65 credit hours) and general education (maximum of 25 credit hours, including a minor area of concentrated study, e.g. business) -- a total of 75% or 90 of the 120 credit hours required for graduation.



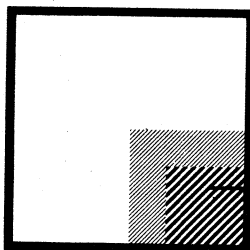
30 (15/15) HOURS

This second, smaller square represents professional education -- 25% or 30 of the 120 credit hours required for graduation.



15 HOURS

This lightly marked area of the second square represents courses in communications -- a maximum of half of professional education or 15 of the 120 credit hours required for graduation.



15 HOURS

This third, heavily marked square represents courses in public relations -- a minimum of half of professional education or 15 of the 120 credit hours required for graduation.

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATOR

Just as this Commission report sets certain guidelines for the public relations undergraduate curriculum, Commission members also feel that it is essential that public relations educators possess certain qualifications and expertise to insure that students receive the best possible instruction and counsel.

The public relations educator should be one who has experience in the practice of public relations, teaching experience at the university level, and an advanced degree in public relations/communication, preferably at the doctoral level. Because teachers with such credentials are relatively scarce, the heads of public relations educational programs should be sure that their faculties as a whole have an adequate mix of appropriate professional experience and advanced academic preparation in public relations. **Public relations courses should not be taught by people who have little or no experience and interest in the field and have no academic preparation in public relations.**

It is also critical that the size and quality of the public relations instructional staff be adequate to maintain high standards of teaching in all public relations subject areas recommended in this report. Even though public relations programs should be primarily staffed by full-time public relations faculty, qualified part-time or adjunct faculty can often bring a fresh, progressive viewpoint and special expertise to the program.

The best public relations faculty members bring unique vitality and enthusiasm to their teaching duties. They provide ongoing, personalized counseling to their students on curriculum matters and in other areas important to academic preparation for a public relations career. They also assist students in locating and securing appropriate public relations positions upon graduation.

Public relations educators should be expected to continue professional development throughout their careers, with sufficient emphasis on research (adding to the body of knowledge of the public relations profession and education), scholarly and professional writing for publication, and practical work experience in the public relations field from time to time. Public relations educators also are expected to provide appropriate educational and support services to the public relations field and to be active participants in one or more of its professional organizations.

SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION: THE NEEDS

Students studying for public relations account for an increasing number of enrollments in undergraduate programs. Too frequently, the support for the discipline by college administrations has not kept pace with this burgeoning market, thus penalizing the students.

Faculty-to-student ratios are often much too high. As a result, public relations classes become overpopulated; faculty without adequate qualifications are sometimes enlisted to teach public relations; faculty may have too many students assigned for counseling; little faculty time remains for research, publication and service to the profession.

The Commission recommends that administrators review their support for public relations programs to ensure that equitable resources are allocated to meet their commitments to their consumers -- students who believe they are receiving adequate preparation to enter the contemporary field.

A similar review is called for by professionals in the practice of public relations.

Educational institutions are providing increasing numbers of graduates who are qualified to take entry-level positions in the field. Programs for formal public relations education are providing professional legitimacy to the field. Educators are adding significantly to the literature, research and body of knowledge in public relations.

Yet with such substantive contributions being made by the educational sector to the practice and professional maturity of the field, support by the majority of practitioners for public relations education is inadequate to meet the growing demands on education. The Commission recommends that practitioners recognize these contributions, identify and take new initiatives to provide support to educators and schools which offer strong programs of public relations education.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

In one sense, public relations education is highly cost-effective. It requires no expensive laboratory apparatus or high-tech equipment. It can share video display terminals and word processors with other educational programs in communications.

However, in a labor-intensive enterprise such as education, undergraduate public relations education is even more labor-intensive. Most undergraduate public relations educational programs are housed in colleges of journalism, mass communication or liberal arts. Yet they compete for faculty on the same basis as professional colleges of business and law.

The Commission recommends that salaries be set at levels to attract professors with at least five years of professional experience in managing public relations programs, with high levels of competence for managing public relations research, evaluation and reporting of results. In many cases, professors of public relations also will need the competence to include in their public relations classes the principles of management, marketing and finance that students often cannot get elsewhere because of the current difficulty of enrolling in classes in colleges of business.

We recommend that administrative support be set at maintaining a faculty-student ratio of 1 to 15 for public relations writing and production courses and a ratio of no more than 1 to 20 for upper-class courses. In addition to reasonable teaching loads, public relations faculty should be allowed sufficient time to work with students in such co-curricular activities as the Public Relations Student Society of America and student-operated public relations firms; to promote and supervise internships and professional partner programs.

Administrative support also should provide the resources to allow public relations faculty to participate actively in professional public relations organizations.

In return for adequate administrative support, deans have a right to expect appropriate levels of research and publication by their public relations faculties. Professors who qualify for managing public relations programs and research also have an obligation to both the practice and teaching to create new knowledge. They owe to the teaching profession the creation of theoretical, basic or pure knowledge. They owe to the public relations practice the creation of applied knowledge. They owe to both -- and to their colleagues -- the sharing of this knowledge through publication.

SUPPORT FROM THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Until this generation of public relations graduates is in a position to provide or influence substantial personal or corporate contributions to their schools or to foundations established for public relations education, such support must come primarily from present leaders in the practice and their firms. These contributions are one important way practitioner-leaders can encourage stronger programs of public relations education. Such contributions can also be designated to support a special project or objective in which practitioners and their firms have particular interest.

In return for furnishing the profession with competent graduates who can assume entry-level positions with minimal supervision and who have potential to advance to higher positions, the professional practice should also provide to public relations educators increased opportunities to update their knowledge in the field.

The Commission also recommends that corporate relations departments and public relations firms provide grants to professors of public relations for service such as research or management of special programs. Such grants may be awarded directly to public relations professors or to foundations of professional societies and universities.

These professional partnerships between education and the practice can provide meaningful work experience to professors and valuable service to the grantors.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PRACTICE AND EDUCATION

Relations between public relations educators and practitioners have improved significantly since the first Commission's report, "A Design for Public Relations Education," was published in 1975.

Professional and educational organizations and foundations established to encourage public relations education have been primarily responsible for the growing, productive dialogue and cooperation between the practice and the educational community. Increasingly, educators are being recognized as leaders in the profession.

The rapid growth of the Public Relations Student Society of America has generated higher visibility for public relations education. While responsible self-support and governance by this thriving student organization have grown, so too has the support by its parent society.

Local chapters of national professional organizations sponsor student organizations, provide advisers, internships, classroom speakers and resources, and involve both practitioners and educators in professional development programs.

Many colleges and universities have retained public relations practitioners as part-time instructors. There have been numerous and notable examples of practitioners who have returned to the college campus as lecturers or adjunct professors following distinguished careers in the practice of public relations.

Public relations educators are conducting more research, have broadened and enriched the public relations literature and are destined to play increasingly important roles in professional development and continuing education. Many educators have sought out opportunities -- during summer vacation and sabbaticals, for example -- to take part-time jobs in public relations departments and with counseling firms. Some manage to combine teaching with outside consulting assignments.

Such cooperation and relationships between professionals in the practice and in education should be nurtured and strengthened and new ways to reinforce this partnership be constantly sought. The prime beneficiary of such initiatives will be the profession, whose future is personified by today's students of public relations.

APPENDIX

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APPENDIX 1

Official Statement on Public Relations (Formally adopted by PRSA Assembly, November 6, 1982)

Public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony.

Public relations serves a wide variety of institutions in society such as businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospitals, and educational and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders and other institutions, and with society at large.

The managements of institutions need to understand the attitudes and values of their publics in order to achieve institutional goals. The goals themselves are shaped by the external environment. The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management and, as a mediator, helps to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action.

As a management function, public relations encompasses the following:

- . Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues which might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
- . Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.
- . Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization's aims. These may include marketing, financial, fund-raising, employee, community or government relations and other programs.
- . Planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy.
- . Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities -- in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.

- . Examples of the knowledge that may be required in the professional practice of public relations include communication arts, psychology, social psychology, sociology, political science, economics and the principles of management and ethics. Technical knowledge and skills are required for opinion research, public issues analysis, media relations, direct mail, institutional advertising, publications, film/video productions, special events, speeches and presentations.

In helping to define and implement policy, the public relations practitioner utilizes a variety of professional communication skills and plays an integrative role both within the organization and between the organization and the external environment.

APPENDIX 2

From Accredited Journalism and Mass Communications Education,
1985-86, Copyright, 1985, ACEJMC, Accrediting
Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications

The Spirit of Liberal Education

Each institution is free within broad limits to set its own objectives. Those objectives will vary with the nature of the institution, the resources available and the character of the student body. However, such variance is limited, of necessity, by the ACEJMC accrediting standards and by the generally accepted philosophy of education in journalism and mass communications.

Historically, programs in this field have developed in relation to and in lively interaction with the traditional liberal arts and sciences. Proper education in journalism and mass communications is broad and general -- not narrow and specialized. Practitioners must command the basic skills required by the specialized area in which they choose to work, but the practical component of their education must not be overemphasized, nor should it be allowed to crowd out and make marginal the liberal arts and sciences.

The traditional arts and sciences remain the solid basis of professional education for all of journalism and mass communications. The Council recognizes that fields like advertising and public relations require additional work in marketing and business administration. It also recognizes that broadcasting and broadcast instruction require production courses often taken outside the journalism and mass communications unit. Still, the Council emphasizes the liberal character of education for all who work in this field and the necessity to limit strictly practical courses in the curriculum, independent of where such courses originate.

Every student needs room for general electives and the opportunity to pursue strictly personal and/or avocational interests. Nonetheless, the Council is concerned about the tendency to dissipate the quality and pertinence of education by overindulgence in excessively specialized and excessively frivolous courses. Therefore, units should control carefully, within the limits of institutional policy, the total education of their students....

The spirit of liberal education has been expressed through a formula -- that approximately twenty-five (25) percent of a student's education should be in the journalism and mass communications unit and approximately seventy-five (75) percent in general and academic courses with an emphasis (no less than 65 semester hours) on the liberal arts and sciences. Typically, a major in this field consists of about 30 semester hours in journalism and mass communications courses, though some of those courses are expected to be in the more academic study

and analysis of the mass media. Courses in the professional unit, then, work out to be approximately twenty-five (25) percent of the typical 120 semester-hour degree. This is the desired and expected model for education in journalism and mass communications.

The character and quality of the non-journalism, non-mass communications portion of a student's program are of vital educational importance and should be monitored carefully by the unit. Assurances that a college of liberal arts is taking care of general education without examination by and recommendations from the unit are not enough. The unit should endeavor through advising and prerequisites and by working with other units to ensure that a majority of a student's education is in academic disciplines that contribute to the development of a fund of substantial knowledge about the modern world.

Curriculum

Standard:

The unit's curriculum must provide students with a solid opportunity to learn not only why and how to communicate but also what to communicate. This requirement calls for a reasonable balance between journalism and mass communications courses and courses in other disciplines, primarily in the liberal arts and sciences. Balance also should be provided between instruction in practical skills and in the more philosophical aspects of journalism and mass communications.

Explanation:

Today's world is complex and fast-paced. To prepare students for such a world, a sound educational program should provide a broad exposure to the liberal arts and sciences, up-to-date instruction in the skills necessary to practice journalism and mass communications, and understanding of the role of the mass media as important social institutions.

Consequently, no more than approximately twenty-five (25) percent of a student's work should be in journalism and mass communications courses, including journalism and mass communications courses taken outside the unit.

No limit is placed on journalism and mass communications courses taken in excess of the hours required for a professional degree, so long as the 25/75 percent ratio is observed in the degree requirements.

Students should be exposed to liberal arts and sciences content and concepts in their journalism and mass communications courses. However, it is important that they receive their instruction in general education and the liberal arts and sciences in departments primarily concerned with a given discipline. It is equally important that they receive such instruction from faculty members who have been educated in those disciplines and who continue to be active scholars in those areas of expertise.

The unit curriculum proper should be systematic and comprehensive. Students should receive rigorous practical training and demanding scholarly instruction. Courses should be offered in an order to ensure that students learn to gather, analyze, organize, synthesize and communicate information in a format appropriate to their areas of specialization. Competence in English should be stressed everywhere, and demonstration of such competence should be a requirement for graduation. Theoretical instruction and practical laboratory experience should be provided in the basic skills of writing, reporting, editing, visual communication, layout and design, and other fundamental techniques appropriate for such specialities as advertising, public relations and broadcasting. Whatever the specialization, the skills work should be offered in a context of philosophical instruction in such areas as history, law, ethics and mass communications theory.

The unit should concentrate its professional courses in the last two years of a four-year program and should not offer more than two full-year professional courses (or equivalent) below the junior year.

The following from ACEJMC Training Manual for 1993-94 Visiting Teams

C.1993

Because universities require different numbers of credit hours for graduation, the policy outlined in 1-5 was adopted by the Council in September 1992 and revised in May 1993:

1. Students, in the undergraduate program, must take a minimum of 90 semester hours in courses outside the major area of journalism and mass communications, with no fewer than 65 semester hours in the basic liberal arts and sciences. This requirement is based on 120 semester hours required for graduation. For schools on the quarter system, 131 quarter hours is equivalent to 90 semester hours and 94 quarter hours is equivalent to 65 semester hours.
2. However, a unit with a curriculum requiring between 120 and 124 semester hours for graduation may count up to six hours of journalism/mass communications courses that are liberal arts and sciences in nature as part of the "90" (but not the basic "65") and, therefore, "outside" or exempt from the major if such courses meet at least one of the criteria listed below. A unit with a curriculum requiring between 125 and 128 semester hours for graduation may count up to three hours of courses as "part" of the "90" and therefore "outside" or exempt from the major if they meet at least one of the criteria listed below: [A unit on the quarter system requiring between 175 and 183 hours may count up to eight quarter hours or two courses that are liberal arts and sciences in nature as part of the "131" (but not the basic "94") and, therefore, "outside" or exempt from the major if such courses meet at least one of the criteria listed below. A unit on the quarter system with a curriculum requiring between 184 and 188 quarter hours may count one course or four quarter hours as "part" of the "131" and, therefore, "outside" or exempt from the major if they meet at least one of the criteria listed below.]
3. The exemption criteria are:
 - (a) The course(s) is part of the general education requirements or electives of the university, or
 - (b) The course(s) can be used to satisfy a basic or advanced writing requirement of the university and is otherwise not required for graduation from a professional curriculum, or
 - (c) The course(s) is primarily offered to upper division students as a general elective, is academic (as opposed to professional) in nature and is demonstrated by the unit to be genuinely "liberal arts and sciences" in content.
4. A committee of Council and Committee members will review material on selected courses that units submit for exemption.
5. The Council places no limit on the number of courses that a unit may submit for exemption. However, depending on the number of hours required for graduation by the institution, no more than one or two courses for each student may be selected.

APPENDIX 3

The "90-Hour" Rule *

Based on 120 credit hours required for graduation, the ACEJMC standard requires that students take a minimum of 90 semester hours in courses outside the major area of journalism and mass communications, with no less than 65 semester hours in basic liberal arts and science courses.

To ensure compliance with this important accreditation standard and to ensure accurate data which command confidence, ACEJMC requires each school or department seeking accreditation or reaccreditation to include in its pre-visit report the number of semester hours taken in non-journalism and mass communications and in liberal arts, sciences and social sciences by all members of each graduating class in the two years before the accreditation visit.

This complete class census is necessary to prove compliance under the new liberal arts standard by at least "95 percent of each graduating class in the two years prior to an accreditation visit."

In addition, ACEJMC will institute immediately the procedures necessary to ensure that visiting teams inspect and verify the accuracy of a significant sample of student course transcripts, and that they report to the Accrediting Committee and to the Council their findings about compliance with the 95 percent rule.

In the self-study, schools normally should provide transcripts of 25 percent of the graduates of each sequence or department if there are no sequences for the year preceding the visit. The self-study should contain a minimum of 25 transcripts per sequence or department, unless the total number is fewer than 25.

* Adopted by ACEJMC October 1985

APPENDIX 4

From Accredited Journalism and Mass Communications Education, 1985-86, Copyright, 1985, ACEJMC, Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications

Internships and Work Experience

Standard:

Internships and other quality work experience in journalism and mass communications should be encouraged. Academic credit may be awarded only for strictly monitored and carefully supervised internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications but must not exceed three semester hours.

Explanation:

Journalism and mass communications internships can add a significant, realistic component to a student's education. When students hold internships, and particularly when academic credit is awarded for internships, the unit should develop a formally structured and supervised internship program. Internships for credit should always be closely supervised and monitored by a regular member of the academic staff. Supervision should include advance negotiation with the organization or business offering the internship, strict specification of the duties undertaken, and regular reports from a designated supervisor at the employing firm and from the internee, and faculty visits to the site of the internship.

Evidence:

- A. The structure and supervision of internship programs as described in the self-study report and interviews with students, faculty, and cooperating employers.
- B. Student interviews about the quality of their internship experience.
- C. Credit for internships in official student transcripts, whether the journalism or mass communications internship originates in the unit or any other department of the university.

PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENT SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The student Society was established in 1967 by the Public Relations Society of America. The PRSA National Board of Directors has the sole authority for granting PRSSA charters to qualifying colleges and universities.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ESTABLISHING A PRSSA CHAPTER

In accordance with PRSA Bylaws, Article XVII, and PRSSA National Bylaws:

- 1) A PRSSA chapter may be established and maintained only at a college or university which offers baccalaureate degrees, is accredited by a nationally or regionally recognized accrediting association or board, offers a sequence of at least five courses in public relations and is supplemented by courses allied to this field of study. While it would be inappropriate for PRSA to try to characterize the specific nature of the courses of study in public relations, we subscribe to the subject areas and credit hours identified by the 1987 Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education. The areas of study the Commission identified as:
 1. Principles, Practice as Theory of Public Relations
 2. Public Relations Techniques: Writing, Message Dissemination and Media Networking
 3. Public Relations Research for Planning and Evaluation
 4. Public Relations Strategy and Implementation
 5. Supervised Public Relations Experience
2. The minimum number of students required for establishing a chapter is ten, at least one of whom must have satisfactorily completed a public relations course, the remaining students either affirming in writing their plan to major in public relations or demonstrating their interest in the subject by enrolling in at least one course. A minimum of eight of the students required for establishing a PRSSA chapter must be at or below the junior level.
3. Students petitioning for a PRSSA charter must elect as their proposed chapter faculty advisor a full-time teacher of at least one, but not all, of the public relations courses offered at their college or university. The faculty advisor must be a member of the Public Relations Society of America.
4. Petitioning students must also elect one or two professional advisors, each a Member of PRSA, at least one of whom must be a Member who is Accredited. (Associate members do not qualify for this position.)
5. Each application for a PRSSA charter must be endorsed by the president and four additional members of the sponsoring PRSA chapter.

Application forms for PRSSA charters and the names and addresses of appropriate PRSA chapters and their presidents may be obtained from PRSA headquarters in New York.

For further information, write:

Educational Affairs Department
Public Relations Society of America
33 Irving Place
New York, NY 10003