

# PR UPDATE

The newsletter for the Public Relations Division of AEJMC

Volume 52, No.2  
March 2017



## Spring Issue





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# PR UPDATE

Vol. 52, No. 2; March 2017

## Division Leadership

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*Vice Head*

**Richard Waters**

University of San Francisco

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Rhode Island College

*Immediate Past Head*

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**Dean Mundy**

University of Oregon

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**Lois Boynton**

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

**Brandi Watkins**

Virginia Tech

**Yuan Wang**

University of Alabama

*Contributors*

**Curtis Matthews**

Kansas State

**Leysan Khakimova Storie**

Zayed University

**Cary Greenwood**

Middle Tennessee State University

**editor's note:**

Dean Mundy

[dmundy@uoregon.edu](mailto:dmundy@uoregon.edu)



## On the radar

I keep chuckling while I write this note for our "Spring" PR Update issue. Here I sit at the dining room table, looking out into the yard... on March 5th... enjoying the most splendid snow shower.

From what I understand, Oregon typically doesn't get measurable snow in March, but alas it's been a record-breaking winter. Highlights include a December ice storm that left us without power for six days; a January snow that almost totaled double digits, followed by a second ice storm that precluded trash pick up for one month; and a February where we received more than 10" of rain rather than the typical 5". One day last week, and I mean in one day, we had a thunderstorm, snow, sleet, and hail.

So I've learned to monitor the radar rather frequently - what's coming up? What do we need to prepare for? Thus is the theme of this issue as we move ever-so-closer to the April 1 paper deadline and the August conference in Chicago. As you'll see, the conference is shaping up nicely... we are making good preparation for what's ahead.

All this to say, regardless of how hard winter has been (or how daunting putting together that paper for submission currently feels), spring indeed is just around the corner. And as I've often said of weather in the PNW: October, November, December, January, February, March and April showers bring May flowers. It's in sight on the radar!

PR UPDATE is published quarterly, with a special post-conference edition. You can find past issues [here](#).

Please send all inquiries and contributions to [dmundy@uoregon.edu](mailto:dmundy@uoregon.edu)



# Springing forward toward April 1 and AEJMC 2017

a message from the Division Head:

**Emily Kinsky**

[ekinsky@mail.wtamu.edu](mailto:ekinsky@mail.wtamu.edu)



Earlier this month, I returned from the AEJMC Midwinter Conference in Norman, Okla. where PRD made its first appearance. We were well received, and I was impressed with the research shared and feedback offered. As I write this, PRD members are headed to IPRRC in its first year in Orlando, and others are headed to the Southeast Colloquium in Fort Worth. It's a busy month!

In addition to the conferences, we have a big deadline looming on April 1. We hope you will submit your best work to one of PRD's five categories: open research, teaching research, student-only research, the Doug Newsom Award or the PR History Award. You may submit up to two papers across those five categories. Thanks to generous members and friends of PRD, each category has a financial reward for the winner(s)!

Once these papers are submitted, the research and teaching chairs will work extremely hard to sort the papers and assign them to appropriate reviewers. I hope you'll consider reviewing for us this year. Please contact [Lan Ni](#) to sign up. We are likely to have a record number of submissions because of the Chicago location, so we will need extra reviewers to provide helpful feedback on each submission. Let's all encourage each other to better and better manuscripts.

Let your graduate students know about our grants and other opportunities specifically for them. In this issue, you'll see the call for the Roschwalb Award and information about the Kaiser Award, which will have more details coming soon. We will have our 3rd Annual

Graduate Student Luncheon at the conference in Chicago, and they are currently looking for a sponsor. If your program would like to sponsor the student luncheon, please contact [Yuan Wang](#).

We are also looking for sponsors for our annual networking social. Details about the sponsorship levels can be found on p. 8. Contact [Amanda Kennedy](#) or [Holly Ott](#) for more information.

Richard Waters has done a fantastic job programming our panels this year, which you can read more about on p. 10. He has also spearheaded our plans for a pre-conference on August 8 on the topic of navigating fake news. Watch for more details soon!

Remember to share service efforts you're undertaking this spring with your students as we celebrate a Semester of Service. Email [Brooke McKeever](#) with details and photos.

Members were sent an email recently about two new members-only benefits on our website. We hope you will enjoy having access to the speakers bureau and to publishing tips from three journal editors.

Another membership benefit is our support for each other. We have several PRD members running for office within AEJMC. See p. 7 for the list. Be sure to back them with your vote!

Thank you for your support of the PR Division. We wouldn't be the same without you!





# AEJMC Midwinter Recap

by [Emily Kinsky](#)

For the first time, the PR Division participated in the AEJMC Midwinter Conference at the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma.

Richard Waters and I began investigating our options after several members requested a regional conference presence for PRD, and things began to fall into place for our Midwinter participation.

On March 3 and 4, a group of scholars gathered to hear paper presentations and topic-based panels. Twelve paper abstracts were accepted for presentation by PRD, which were shared via panel presentations. David Cleveland and Michelle O'Malley of Ball State University were selected as having the top paper abstract for PRD.

One of the great aspects of Midwinter is the encouragement to take the feedback you are given and to revise your work for the April 1 AEJMC deadline. Thus, the paper titles from Midwinter won't be shared here in order to keep our reviews blind for the AEJMC paper competition.

The two theme-based, proposed panels from PRD were on "Beating Burnout and Creating an Academic Life: Balancing Research, Teaching and Service" with Margaretha Geertsema-Sligh (Butler University), Debbie R. Yount (University of Oklahoma), Jensen

Moore (University of Oklahoma) and myself (West Texas A&M University); and "Modern Public Relations Theory" featuring Katerina Tsetsura (University of Oklahoma), Josh Bentley (Texas Christian University) and Vilma Luoma-aho (University of Jyväskylä, Finland). Both of these led to great discussions. With all of the questions and advice given, one attendee commented that the "Burnout" session could have easily gone on for several hours. Some of the advice from that panel included finding a gatekeeper/mentor to run things by before saying yes, setting aside a day without work emails or grading, and scheduling research and giving the response "I already have an appointment" when a student asks to meet then.

Midwinter was a great event for both students and faculty to test the waters with new research ideas and works-in-progress or to get feedback on completed work. I saw faculty from across the country, as well as students in Ph.D., master's and even undergraduate programs. I hope you'll consider submitting work for Midwinter next fall!

***Later in this issue, on page 16, please see some highlights from the presentations.***



## Reminder #1: the **deadline doth approach.** PR Division **Call for Papers** AEJMC 2017 Conference

The Public Relations Division invites submissions of original papers that advance the theories and practices of public relations. Submitters should carefully review the specific submission instructions published in the [winter issue of PR Update](#)

**Submission Categories:** A paper may be submitted in one of the five PRD categories this year: (1) open, (2) student, (3) teaching, (4) Newsom Award, or (5) PR History Award.

**Top Papers:** Monetary awards are given for the top three papers in the teaching, open and student categories. Thanks to a generous gift from Dennis Wilcox, Professor Emeritus, San Jose State University, top papers in open and teaching categories will be awarded: **\$750** for the top paper, **\$500** for the second-place paper, and **\$250** for the third-place paper. Top teaching papers will also receive expedited review in the Journal of Public Relations Education, provided they are submitted by December 31, 2017. Thanks to the generous support of The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama, the first author of each of the top three student research papers will receive \$300, \$200, and \$100, respectively.

Winners of **The Doug Newsom Award** and **PR History Award** each receive \$250.

**Questions?** Please contact Research Chair Lan Ni, University of Houston, [lni@uh.edu](mailto:lni@uh.edu) or Vice Chair Nathan Gilkerson, Marquette University, [nathan.gilkerson@marquette.edu](mailto:nathan.gilkerson@marquette.edu).

**Reminder #2:** To participate as a reviewer, you must be a faculty member. Graduate students are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

We still need  
reviewers!

You will not be assigned to review in categories in which you have submitted papers for the competition.

First, please sign up at AllAcademic: <https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/aejmc/aejmc17/>

Even though you may have done this service last year, the AllAcademic website is unique each year and you must sign up for this year to serve as a reviewer. Time is running out.

In order to assign papers that best match your areas of topical and methodological expertise, please click the following link for our reviewer interest survey:

[https://houstoncommunication.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0ePqszthuGAAzgV](https://houstoncommunication.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0ePqszthuGAAzgV)



## PRD Reminder #3: Roschwalb Call

### Call for Applications:

Applications are now being accepted for the Susanne A. Roschwalb Grant for International Study and Research. This award is intended for both graduate and undergraduate students in public relations whose plans include study or research outside of the United States. The grant, awarded annually by the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), provides the winning student with \$250 to offset the cost of travel associated with international study or research.

### Award Criteria

Full-time undergraduate and graduate students majoring in or emphasizing in public relations at four-year colleges and universities in the United States are eligible to apply.

### Application Process

Applicants must provide a one-page description of their intended international program of study or research, a letter of support from a full-time public relations faculty member, and the completed application form ([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dP\\_ECf1Ehbf66EloorCTUTWDF8pgiGjcj9tSYiCpQC0/viewform?c=0&w=1](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dP_ECf1Ehbf66EloorCTUTWDF8pgiGjcj9tSYiCpQC0/viewform?c=0&w=1)).

### Deadline

Deadline for receipt of applications is May 1, 2017 at 5 p.m. (EDT), for international study or research during the 2017-2018 academic year. The Roschwalb Grant Committee will notify the winner no later than June 1, 2017.

## Reminder #4: VOTE

AEJMC voting has opened; you should have received an email with that ballot link. We wanted to point out several of **our PR Division members** who are running.

**Publications Committee:** Pat Curtin and Karen Miller Russell

**Research Committee:** Kay Colley, Jae-Hwa Shin and Richard Waters.

**Teaching Committee:** Brigitta Brunner

Please support our fellow PRD members as they seek leadership roles within AEJMC!

The **deadline to vote online is April 3.**

Profiles of those running can be found here:

<http://www.aejmc.org/home/2017/02/aejmc-2017-election-profiles/>





# Seeking Sponsors: PRD Chicago Social

The PRD Annual Social is an evening for members and others to network, catch up with friends, and meet new colleagues. Book raffles, door prizes, and trivia add to the fun, along with delicious local food and drink.

This year's social event will be held from 7-9 p.m., Fri., Aug. 11, 2017, at an exciting local venue.

BUT... we need your help! This event would not exist without support from generous sponsors. Please consider becoming a valued sponsor at one of the following levels open to any individual or organization interested in PR research & education.

## TITLE LEVEL/MAIN EVENT SPONSOR (\$1,500+)

- \* Named on event signage
- \* Recognition from division head on PRD listserv
- \* Recognition in PR Update (division newsletter)
- \* Short feature story in PR Update (division newsletter)
- \* Personal thank you announced at the event
- \* Mentions on PRD social media channels
- \* Distribution of your branded materials at the event
- \* On-site product demonstration and/or special display rights (as relevant) at the event
- \* Named event sponsor on all promoted materials

## PLATINUM LEVEL (\$500-1,499)

- \* Named on event signage
- \* Recognition from division head on PRD listserv
- \* Recognition in PR Update (division newsletter)
- \* Personal thank you announced at the event
- \* Mentions on PRD social media channels
- \* Distribution of your branded materials at the event

## GOLD LEVEL (\$300-499)

- \* Named on event signage
- \* Recognition from division head on PRD listserv
- \* Recognition in PR Update (division newsletter)
- \* Mentions on PRD social media channels

## SILVER LEVEL (\$100-299)

- \* Named on event signage
- \* Recognition from division head on PRD listserv
- \* Recognition in PR Update (division newsletter)

## BUT WAIT... THERE is MORE:

Want to welcome a new colleague? Congratulate somebody newly hired or tenured? Say "Great Work!" to someone who recently defended a dissertation? Say "I/We love it!" to someone who just published a book? Want to individually sponsor the PRD Social with no hassles, but want it more affordable than silver, gold, or platinum?

THEN become a BRONZE SPONSOR with a \$50-\$99 donation! In return, you'll receive...

- \* Individual, group of individuals, or honoree named on event signage
- \* Recognition from division head in PR Update
- \* Personalized message to honoree displayed at the event and delivered to honoree.

Questions or Interest?

Contact [Amanda Kennedy](#) or [Holly Ott](#)





# Seeking Sponsors: PRD Graduate Student Luncheon

By [Yuan Wang](#), Graduate Student Committee

During this year's annual conference, the Public Relations Division (PRD) will host the **third annual Graduate Student Luncheon**. The luncheon gathers graduate students in the field of public relations and provides a networking opportunity for them during AEJMC annual conferences.

Over the past two years, the luncheon has supported a total of 58 graduate students from 20 universities, some of whom have become faculty members throughout the country. The third annual graduate student luncheon will accommodate approximately 20 graduate students.

We can't do it, though, without the sponsorship of generous institutions. A featured sponsor of the luncheon has many benefits. It is a great opportunity to stand out in the minds of graduate students who will enter doctoral programs or the academic job market soon. It can also help your school attract and recruit outstanding graduate students. A faculty representative from the sponsor(s) will be invited to speak with the graduate student participants of the luncheon to promote his/her school and/or graduate program.

Please consider being a sponsor today! If your institution would like to be the single titled sponsor for the event (e.g., "Graduate Student Luncheon

presented by \_\_\_\_"), the donation would be \$500, or your institution could co-sponsor the event for \$250. Alternately, if you would like to sponsor a portion of the event in any other amount (e.g., \$100 or \$200, etc.), we would certainly appreciate that.

The event sponsor(s) will be recognized in an ad and a news article in the *PR UPDATE*, on PRD's social media channels, on-site at the division's business meeting, and on the PRD listserv. Our committee will also recognize the sponsor(s) and distribute the sponsor's branded materials during the luncheon.

If your institution is interested in contributing as a sponsor of our event or you have any questions, please contact [Yuan Wang](#) (205-239-1743), Co-Chair of the AEJMC PRD Graduate Student Liaison Committee. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

## **Graduate Luncheon Committee:**

Julia Fraustino, Faculty Adviser (West Virginia)  
Yuan Wang, Co-Chair (Luncheon) (Alabama)  
Tiffany Schweickart, Co-Chair (Membership) (Florida)  
Baobao Song (Florida)  
Barbara Myslik (Florida)  
Jennifer Harker (UNC Chapel Hill)  
Mila Khalitova (Florida)  
Stephanie Mahin (UNC Chapel Hill)

# Announcing our AEJMC 2017 Panel Lineup

By [Richard Waters](#), University of San Francisco

In the previous edition of the newsletter, I highlighted the process for selecting the panels and explained why many good panel proposals aren't ultimately scheduled due to the limited number of spots that the RPD has as well as the challenges with co-sponsoring sessions with other divisions that often have different plans for their limited conference sessions. That being said, I'm thrilled to reveal the panels that have been selected for this year's conference in Chicago. Working with the research, teaching, and professional freedom and responsibility committees, we have selected panels that reflect a range of topics and co-sponsors that will bring some new topics for discussion by our membership.

The following list highlights this year's panels with proposed titles and moderators along with a brief description pulled from the proposals. It also lists the day and time that the panel has been scheduled. Research sessions will be scheduled following the paper competition and announced in May.

## **Wednesday, August 9, 2017**

***"Public Relations, Public Health, Public Good: Preparing a New Generation of Nonprofit and Public Sector Communications Professionals"*** (co-sponsored with ComSHER Division from 8:15-9:45am) will be moderated by Denise Bortree from Penn State University. This teaching panel will demonstrate how varying approaches can be used to prepare students to work in nonprofit public relations with a special focus on health, science, and

environment. Panelists will share their experiences from classroom innovation including examples of effective activities and case study suggestions that will help prepare students for the unique challenges that face them in their chosen career paths.

***"Can Communication and Legal Get Along? Examining Tensions and Cooperation between Legal Counsel and Communication Practitioners"*** (co-sponsored with Law & Policy Division from 10:00-11:30am) will be moderated by Alexander Laskin from Quinnipiac University. This PF&R panel will convene practitioners and academics to discuss recent salient issues, developments and interactions involving communication and legal professionals in a corporate context. The panelists will focus on such issues as the benefits of clear and transparent communication and business practices to the success of the enterprise, its stakeholders and society generally, versus working within legal and regulatory constraints and protections.

***"Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Social Scientific and Cultural Approaches to Understanding How Visuals Work in Public Relations"*** (co-sponsored with Visual Communication Division from 1:30-3:00pm) will be moderated by Matt Haught from Memphis University. This PF&R panel examines the ways practitioners can work to evaluate and measure visual communication within campaigns and the ways researchers can advance knowledge in the area. The panel will provide a needed public discussion about how scholars and practitioners can work together to critically analyze the use of visuals in public relations.



## ...our AEJMC 2017 Panel Lineup (cont'd)

**Thursday, August 10, 2017**

***"The Strategic Imperative of Brand Activism"*** (co-sponsored with Advertising Division from 11:45am-1:15pm). This PF&R panel combines Chicago-area practitioners with academics to discuss best practices, potential pitfalls, and rewards of implementing brand activism as a communications and hiring strategy.

***"Breaking the Cycle of Burnout for Minority Professors: Tips for Coping in the Present and Advocating for the Future"*** (co-sponsored with Small Programs Interest Group from 5:00-6:30pm) will be moderated by Rowena Briones from University of Maryland. Panelists from various career stages in the academy will discuss their experiences with regard to diversity recruitment and retention during this PF&R panel and will offer tips for minority professors to avoid feeling isolated and overwhelmed.

**Friday, August 11, 2017**

***"Public Relations at the Intersections: An Examination of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Class and Sexuality in Action"*** (co-sponsored with LGBT Interest Group from 1:45-3:15pm) will be moderated by Jennifer Vardeman-Winter from University of Houston. This research panel will propel the conversation beyond sexuality and consider the intersections of gender, ethnicity, race, class, and geography, and how they play out in public relations practice and research.

**Saturday, August 12, 2017**

***"Public Relations History in the Classroom: Making More Time for Meaning-Making"*** (co-sponsored with History Division from 9:15-10:45am) will be moderated

by Jeffrey S. Morosoff from Hofstra University. This teaching session will discuss recent research about the lack of public relations history in our classrooms and offer tools and insight designed to empower students with the understanding of history's relevance to this vital profession.

***"The Ethics of Advocacy: A Debate and Discussion of How to Teach Advocacy"*** (co-sponsored with Media Ethics Division from 11:00am-12:30pm) will be moderated by Kathy Fitzpatrick from American University. This debate will challenge teams of three scholars to debate the ethics of organizational advocacy in the current "fake news" environment. While debate judges weigh the arguments from both sides, audiences will discuss strategies for teaching advocacy ethics in the classroom.

I'm personally looking forward to the ethics debate and the burnout panel, but I could not be more pleased with the range of topics that will be discussed at this year's conference. The research topics will, no doubt, bring even more topical diversity to the Chicago conference. I hope that you'll join us in Chicago for these sessions and others that will feature our division members. If you are participating in a session that isn't co-sponsored by Public Relations Division but want it to be featured in our next newsletter, please let me know the panel title, date and time of the panel, and a brief description so that we can include it in our conference preview newsletter later this summer.



## Announcing our GIFT Session Participants

By [Lucinda Austin](#), UNC Chapel Hill

The Teaching Committee is pleased to announce the selected “Great Ideas for Teaching” (GIFT) presentations slated for the 2017 AEJMC Conference in Chicago. The response to the first-ever call for PRD GIFT submissions was tremendous. Less than half of the proposals were able to be selected, via blind review, for either the teaching high-density session or for a spot in the poster presentations. Selected papers will be featured on the AEJMC PRD website and papers from the high-density session will also be featured as teaching briefs in the *Journal of Public Relations Education* (JPRE).

The teaching committee had great fun reading the many creative submissions. The selection was tough, and we wish we could have accepted more of your stellar ideas.

Thank you to the members of the PRD Teaching Committee who undertook blind review of the submissions: Katie Place, Quinnipiac University; Brigitta Brunner, Auburn University; and Michele Ewing, Kent State University.

Thank you also to JPRE Editor Chuck Lubbers and Associate Editor Emily Kinsky for working with us to secure a place for the selected submissions in the journal.


Lastly, thank you to PRD Vice-Chair Richard Waters who first proposed the idea for a new GIFT submission format and made the space for these presentations in the planning of the conference this year.

**Here are the selected 2017 GIFT presentations in alphabetical by author:**

### High Density Session

- **Melissa Adams**, North Carolina State University—Social Media Policy Assignment
- **Mary Brooks and Emily Kinsky**, West Texas A&M University—Who Will Get Chopped?: Mystery Basket PR Challenge





## ...our GIFT Session Participants (cont'd)

### High Density Session (cont'd)

- Kelly Bruhn**, Drake University—  
Improving PR Campaigns with a Roll of the Dice:  
Assuming New Identities to Strengthen Diversity  
and Inclusion
- Tiffany Derville Gallicano**, UNC Charlotte—  
Math, Message Design and Assessment Data: A  
Strategic Approach to the Facebook Assignment
- Jacqueline Lambiase**, Texas Christian  
University—Public Relations Ethics, “Alternative  
Facts” and Critical Thinking, with a Side of Tuna

### Poster Presentations:

- Giselle Auger**, Rhode Island College—  
Teaching the PR Planning Pyramid using Real  
World Scenarios
- Marcia W. DiStaso**, Pennsylvania State  
University—  
Industry Update Assignment
- Dean Mundy**, University of Oregon—  
Defining PR Mini Project
- Stephanie Smith**, Virginia Tech—  
Case Studies in Public Relations
- Brenda Wilson**, Tennessee Technological  
University—  
Using Analogous Activities to Build Critical-  
thinking Skills in an Introduction to Public  
Relations Course

**Thanks again** for everyone’s submissions and the committee’s help in assembling an exciting first GIFT PRD session. Hopefully the first of many.

**Questions?** Please contact [Lucinda Austin](#)



## Preconference on Sports Communication Scrapped from Division Programming, Because My Football Team Lost Super Bowl

By [Richard Waters](#), University of San Francisco

So, the Atlanta Falcons' choking during the final quarter of this year's Super Bowl didn't cause me to convince the Public Relations Division leadership to change our preconference topic. But, it's headlines like this one and the tumultuous environment between media and public relations practitioners that caused us to realize that a change was needed.

The decision to change the preconference focus was not made lightly. With "fake news" and "alternative facts" labels being thrown around daily, we have decided to shift the focus of our preconference from sports communication to managing communication strategies and media relationships in the fake news/alternative facts environment. We wanted to make sure members are aware of the change because the sports topic plan had been announced in the panel proposal call back in August.

Behind-the-scenes developments made it necessary, but it ultimately gives us the opportunity to program a topic that many have been discussing in the social media realm and our classrooms. Based on the success of the Division's February Twitter chat on fake news, we know there will be lots of interest, and the preconference will allow for a deeper discussion of the issues surrounding public relations management in this environment.

**The preconference is scheduled for Tuesday, August 8, 2017, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.,** and it is sponsored by the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Relations. The PR Division will partner with Mass Communication & Society Division to deliver top-notch speakers.

***See our conference line-up and more details on the next page***





## Preconference on Sports Communication Scrapped from Division Programming, Because My Football Team Lost Super Bowl (cont'd)

**This year's preconference will feature three sessions. Each will highlight important lessons and discussion points about "fake news," public relations, and what this means to the profession, journalists, and our classrooms.**

The **first session** will feature chief communication officers and senior-level practitioners discussing how their media relations and stakeholder communication efforts have changed in wake of "alternative facts" and skepticism of organizational announcements and messaging.

The **second session** will convene journalists and media management practitioners from Chicago to discuss how they evaluate and work with PR practitioners' perspectives on news stories.

Finally, **for the third session**, professors from around the country will present classroom activities and curriculum ideas for how to best address "fake news" and "alternative facts" as students ask questions about these topics.

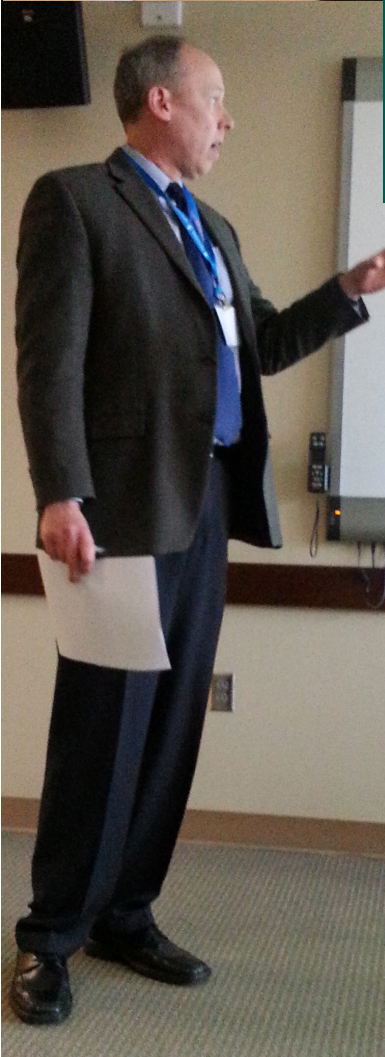
So, I hope you'll join us on Tuesday, August 8 for the Public Relations Division's preconference. You will be able to register for the preconference at the same time you register for the full conference. To help cover our expenses for audiovisual equipment, catering, speaker gifts, and preconference materials, the registration cost of the preconference will be \$10. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out and ask!







**Midwinter Conference 2017  
PR Division at a glance**







# This way to the... AEJMC Fun Run

by [Richard D. Waters](#), University of San Francisco

With the support of the Council of Divisions, AEJMC will be hosting a “fun run” for members at the 2017 Chicago conference. The AEJMC Fun Run will start at a central meeting location at the conference hotel, and people can break off into groups so that everyone is welcome regardless of your pace. Suggested courses for a one-mile and 5k run would be provided to individuals so that you are able to get out and explore the Magnificent Mile, Millennium Park, the Navy Pier, or wherever your run may take you.

Members that register for the AEJMC Fun Run will receive a “finisher medal” that features the winning student logo for the Chicago conference, the Chicago flag, and the Chicago skyline in the design. Whether to brag to colleagues or serve as a memory of the Chicago 2017 conference, the finisher medal will be something that you’ll be proud to display in your office.

Registration for the AEJMC Fun Run is \$10. The proceeds of the event will be used to support student scholarships to future conferences. You can register for the Fun Run using the same form for your conference registration by checking the appropriate box. Advanced registration is necessary to make sure that enough medals are produced. If you have any questions, feel free to email [me](#) or join the “AEJMC Running + Walking Club” on Facebook. I hope to see everyone out for a run, jog, or walk in Chicago!







## **Grunig, J. E. (2017). Meet the Citations. *PR Update*, 52(2). Pgs 18-21.**

### **A faculty profile of Dr. James E. Grunig by [Diana Sisson](#), Auburn University**

*Dr. James E. Grunig, Ph.D., is professor emeritus of public relations from University of Maryland's Department of Communication.*

#### **How has your scholarship influenced your teaching?**

In essence, I would have had little to teach if it had not been for my scholarship. I like to tell the story of my first public relations class, which I taught in 1969. At the time, I did not really see myself as a public relations scholar or professional. I had studied mass communication theory and economics at the University of Wisconsin, along with having taken a number of courses in other social sciences. My dissertation had been on communication and agricultural development in Colombia. In that dissertation, I developed a theory of information, entrepreneurship, and economic development, which I saw basically as a theory of the communication behaviors of potential recipients of economic development information. I had practiced agricultural public relations at Iowa State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the International Harvester Company, and the University of Wisconsin while I was a student at Iowa State and Wisconsin. However, I thought of myself mostly as a communication theorist and researcher. I was assigned a public relations course at Maryland, so I had to teach something in the course. My work experience filled a week or two of classes, so I

turned to my theoretical research to fill out the semester. My dissertation theory of information behaviors became the situational theory of publics when applied to public relations. Psychological theories of communication effects and sociological theories of organizations also became relevant. Soon, I discovered that the theories I was teaching in public relations classes were untested as public relations theories. As a result, I began a lifetime of research in which my teaching informed my research and my research informed my teaching. Graduate courses, in particular, became research laboratories in which my students and I explored and tested theories. I then used those theories as the basis of my undergraduate teaching.

#### **What research habits have you adopted to help you enhance your scholarship?**

Research is a problem-solving process, so I constantly look for interesting and relevant problems in the public relations profession and in the theories we teach in public relations classes. For me, these problems have produced such research questions as what is a public, what are the publics of a given organization and how can the organization communicate with them, why do organizations practice public relations in the way they do, what is the value of public relations, how do you evaluate public relations, what is the nature of a relationship, how do you measure the qualities of a relationship, and what are the tools necessary for a strategic management approach to public relations? Thus, as a researcher, I am



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a habitual problem solver. I look for problems, and I take pleasure in developing theories to solve the problems.

#### **How have you developed a research path/stream over the course of your career? Have you ever left that path, and if so, why?**

Fifty years ago, I had no idea of what I would be researching today. I started with one interesting problem: How and why do people communicate? When I had a theoretical answer to that question, another problem suggested itself: What is a public? When I discovered that organizations generally tried to communicate to their pre-designated publics (but not with their actual publics) without much effect, I asked why organizations practice public relations in such an ineffective way. That question led to a theory of public relations behavior that eventually produced the models of public relations and the dimensions that now make up those models. Then, however, I had to ask what effective public relations is. That question produced an evaluative theory for public relations programs and a relationship theory to explain and evaluate the overall contribution of public relations to organizations, publics, and society. Eventually, all of these questions came together in the Excellence study, where we asked what characteristics of a public relations function, the organization itself, and the environment are most likely to provide value for the organization and publics and to produce communication programs through which organizations and publics communicate effectively with each other and cultivate quality long-term relationships. In

short, I never really had a research plan or path in mind at the beginning of my career. I started with one interesting problem, which led to another interesting problem, and so on. I have been on a path my entire career, but I never really knew where that path would take me. I have been an explorer.

#### **There's lots of advice out there for pre-tenured faculty. What research-based advice do you have for associate professors looking to move to full professor? (But if you have great advice for the pre-tenured among us, feel free to offer that as well!)**

To become a full professor, I believe you have to become known for something—to make an important contribution by solving an important problem. Generally, you do that by constructing a series of studies related to that problem that are published in important journals or in a book. You have to do the same thing to become an associate professor, but to a lesser degree. At that point, you need to have identified a problem and have begun to publish good research related to that problem. Early in my career, it was much easier to become known for something because there were so few scholars in the field and so few theories. Today, it is much more difficult because we have lots of scholars and lots of theories.

Unfortunately, I believe that too many young scholars think that they have to attack and discredit theories we already have in order to make a name for themselves—a process that I describe as destructive criticism. That is not necessary. There

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usually are theoretical problems within the theories we have that can be resolved through constructive criticism and research.

There also are other theories that can be used to address the same problems that seem to have been resolved with older theories. The solutions are different, but different solutions to the same problems have value. Finally, there are many research problems that we haven't yet recognized and solved. For example, digital public relations offers many new research problems. Many of these problems can be solved with classical theories. Others cannot. In short, life (including life in public relations) is filled with problems. To be successful, we must recognize the important problems and solve them.

### **What are your thoughts on helping PR practitioners find and utilize PR research? How can academics help improve this?**

Public relations professionals become interested in research when they believe that it helps to solve the problems they experience in their work. That is why it is important to work in the profession for long enough to understand its problems and to work with professionals to understand what problems they are asked to solve and how they think. That doesn't mean, however, that we should allow practitioners to define all of our research problems for us. Many get stuck on one problem—for example, how can I get more media coverage for my clients? Others have only one solution (one theory) for a lot of problems—for example, what they know how to do or what a PR firm can offer (such as media pitching or information campaigns).

As scholars, therefore, we need to expand the problem-recognition capacities of practitioners. That's not easy to do. As long as they are earning a salary or making money for a firm doing the same things over and over, they won't recognize new problems—such as how to develop a strategic management role for public relations—and they won't learn. People recognize new problems when their situations change, so we have to look for changes affecting practitioners that open their minds to new ideas. Examples have been the call to evaluate and explain the value of public relations and the entirely new situation created by digital media. To recognize these changes, again, scholars must be active in the profession. We can be change agents, but we have to be aware of the situations in which change is required.

### **What directions do you see or hope PR research takes over the next 5 years? 10 years?**

As I said in one of the last journal articles I wrote, called *Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function*, I would like to see public relations scholars flesh out a strategic management role for public relations. There are lots of research questions remaining about what that role is, the tools required for that role, and the institutionalization of that role in the minds of organizational executives, journalists, and the population at large. I would like public relations to be more than a messaging function that tries to publicize an organization and to persuade publics to do what the organization wants. I would like it to be a true profession that serves publics as well as organizations.



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In addition, public relations researchers have an enormous opportunity from the digital revolution. Digital media truly make symmetrical, interactive, or dialogical communication possible and indeed may make it mandatory. In addition, the advanced metrics available in databases provided by digital media offer enormous possibilities for research and environmental scanning. We need to use these data bases as a way to listen to publics, identify problems faced by publics, and to observe and measure the quality of relationships between organizations and publics. As scholars, we also need to learn how to use these data bases to test our theories.

#### **What trends in public relations scholarship have you observed throughout your career?**

Typically, someone gets a new idea for a research problem or a theory and then everyone else jumps on the bandwagon. Two examples from my career are public relations roles and public relations models. Another is crisis communication. We have hundreds of studies of crisis public relations, which actually is not a common public relations problem for practitioners. We need to move forward and out, not just keep replicating the same studies over and over without seeming to learn anything. I think the examples of roles and models are instructive. Public relations roles have evolved into the strategic management function of public relations—well beyond the classic technician and manager roles. Models of public relations have evolved into dimensions of public relations behavior and to strategies for cultivating organization-public relationships. Crisis communication theories also

can be integrated into relationship cultivation strategies. What is the trend? Too much blind acceptance and not enough constructive thinking.

#### **What is the most important thing to remember about doing PR research?**

Always keep recognizing new problems and always continue to think about how to solve those problems—either by using existing public relations theories, adapting theories from other disciplines, modifying existing theories, or constructing completely new theories. At the same time, don't try to destroy older theories if they have successfully solved problems in the past but don't seem to solve new ones. The same theories most likely will be reinvented in the future, and future scholars will think they are new.