

Strong Participation Sizzles at Kansas City Convention

IF YOU MISSED KANSAS CITY, YOU MISSED A LOT:

- a feisty Inez Kaiser sharing her early experiences in the field;
- an impromptu passing of the hat following an "all Carolina" challenge that netted the Roschwalb fund more than \$650;
- 23 members showing up at 7 a.m. to volunteer for Division positions;
- the first official former heads meeting hosted by Fleishman-Hillard;
- and probably the only business meeting in history in which a dues increase for regular members was approved in under five minutes.

Our record number of paper submissions this year resulted in seven provocative, thought-provoking, high-quality research sessions. Be sure and check out the papers as they come online on the AEJMC site. You can link to it through the Division's website maintained by Kirk



Hallahan at <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~aejmcpr/>. Our nine cosponsored panels, ranging from Curriculum Reform to Spinning the Iraq War, were well attended to the point of overflowing, even those in the notorious Saturday time slots. And Tuesday's preconference prompted about 25 professionals from the greater Kansas City area to join us for a discussion of topical issues in the curriculum.

Ken Plowman deserves a large round of thanks for his hard work in pulling off a seamless event and for working with John Edelman to sponsor the newly named Bill Adams/Edelman Luncheon, which Teresa Mastin ably coordinated. (Messages of appreciation should be sent to john.edelman@edelman.com). Special thanks go to David Guth and Church Marsh for helping organize the social and to the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas for sponsoring it for us.

AEJMC leadership declared that the PR Division had the best Professional Freedom & Responsibility (PF&R) report. Thanks go to PF&R chair Larry Lamb for earning us that honor. And once again, the work of Susan Gonders as newsletter editor was singled out by AEJMC for commendation.

Following the business meeting discussion of the need to raise dues to avoid a financial shortfall, Erlbaum Publishing graciously agreed to lower the cost of the journal from \$20 per member to \$18 and to help fund the Roschwalb Award until such time as the division membership can raise enough to endow the fund (see p. 3). This generosity represents unprecedented support from a journal publisher to a division and will allow the PR Division to fund all current projects through the next year.

If all this news has renewed your energy and excitement in the Division, realize we still need to fill a few positions: an appointed delegate to AEJMC and two people for the Nominating Committee. Don't be shy about stepping forward and offering your services or about contacting me. It's your input that makes this Division run. And we're off and running on an exciting year.

Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, past AEJMC president, accompanies Inez Kaiser to the convention's Bill Adams/Edelman Luncheon, where Ms. Kaiser congratulated the graduate students who won the grant named in her honor. The Inez Kaiser Award provides one-year memberships in AEJMC and the PR Division to qualified minority students.

PRD HEAD

Patricia A. Curtin

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OUTGOING PRD EXECUTIVE MEETING

31 July 2003 • Kansas City, Missouri

THE MEETING was called to order at 5 p.m. by Division Head Ken Plowman.

Kirk Hallahan discussed the possibility of moving the Division website to a new server. The issue was tabled pending gathering more information regarding the necessity, advantages and implications of making the move.

Kirk Hallahan moved that the board recommend to the full membership raising annual division dues by \$5 for regular members only (not graduate students); Susan Gonders seconded the motion. Discussion centered on the need to prevent cash flow problems and to permit better service to members, especially in the areas of publications and conference hospitality. The motion passed.

Susan Gonders announced that the *Teaching Public Relations* insert included in each issue of the Division newsletter would continue so long as manuscripts are available.

The board discussed renaming the Edelman Luncheon as the Bill Adams/Edelman Luncheon. The board agreed that no action was needed to effect the change because the event is not an official Division function, but is rather an outside-sponsored event.

The board agreed that the minutes from the 2002 membership meeting would be read aloud for approval at this year's membership meeting.

Division Head Ken Plowman described cash awards instituted by the national AEJMC board to reward division membership growth.

Division Head Ken Plowman expressed gratitude to universities proximate to the convention site – the University of Kansas and Kansas State University – for matching division funds expended to provide hospitality during the Division social. The board agreed that the Division's professional liaison would continue to manage this effort.

Officer and committee reports were presented.

Division Head Ken Plowman announced that an AEJMC task force is looking at realigning the divisions. Chair-elect Pat Curtin is serving on a related committee. Depending on the outcome, the Division could lose "chips" for convention sessions. Curtin said several options are being considered for "chip" allocation. The Council of Divisions will vote on the issue. It was the board's consensus that we should strive for an approach that results in a focus on somewhat fewer sessions for the Division in order to stress quality over quantity, focusing assets on a compressed two-day period of events for the annual convention. This would have the effect of potentially lowering convention costs for members and reducing stress for those with multiple responsibilities. Any proposals are likely to be put to a full AEJMC membership vote.

Division Head Ken Plowman introduced discussion of this year's research paper judging process. There was, he explained, some concern that using two judges per paper rather than three might not be adequately rigorous. Research Chair David Guth said the situation was driven by the high number of papers and the diminished pool of judges. The new board will consider changing categories of paper entries to at least partially address the situation.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Public Relations Division Secretary/Treasurer Alan Freitag.



Ken Plowman and Teresa Mastin recognize authors of top papers at the convention.

PR DIVISION MEMBERS MEETING

31 July 2003 • Kansas City, Missouri

THE MEETING was called to order at 8:35 p.m. by Division Head Ken Plowman.

Incoming Secretary/Treasurer Alan Freitag read salient excerpts from last year's membership meeting, which were approved by the membership as read.

Nominating Committee Chair William Thompson announced that members had elected Chuck Lubbers as vice head-elect, Alan Freitag as secretary/treasurer, and Andi Stein as elected delegate. Ken Plowman was designated as the new chair of the nominating committee for the coming year.

Officer and committee reports were presented:

Pat Curtin, programs chair, said the pre-conference roundtables and the Al Reis dinner with the Advertising Division were successful. She reported that seven panels and seven research sessions (including two extra sessions) were scheduled for this year's convention. A number of the panel sessions included partnerships with other divisions. She suggested that there may be concern our Division is doing too much, spreading members too thinly during the convention. She added that volunteers are needed for several appointed positions and that interested members should attend the incoming executive board meeting the following morning.

Teresa Mastin, vice head-elect, distributed panel proposal forms (see p. 5) for next year's convention in Toronto.

David Guth, research chair, reported receiving 72 papers in the research category for this year's convention, with an acceptance rate of 50 percent due to the additional research sessions the Division was allocated. Andi Stein, teaching chair, reported receiving nine papers, with an acceptance rate of 55 percent.

Larry Lamb summarized the Division's activities in each of the five PF&R categories.

Coy Callison announced that Division membership is steady at around 500 members. He will be contacting the PRSA Educators Academy to arrange a membership list exchange in order to contact potential AEJMC-PRD members. He agreed to continue as membership chair for the coming year.

Lois Boynton, graduate student liaison, announced that the Buddy Program attracted six students and 10 faculty members. She encouraged member participation in the Buddy Program and other graduate student outreach efforts. She agreed to continue as graduate student liaison for the coming year.

Meg Lamme and Phyllis Larsen, Roschwalb Award co-chairs, thanked contributors to the fund and said there had been seven applications for the award. They would like to build the fund to \$6,000 to fully endow it, permitting indefinite continuation of the award without reducing principal. They led a discussion concerning fundraising options and considered combining the grant with the Inez Kaiser Award. Member consensus was to continue funding the award rather than allow funds to be depleted and to solicit funding support. An impromptu fundraising effort among members during the next two days netted more than \$650.

Leah Simone reported that 21 sponsors had provided support, permitting 19 graduate students to benefit from the Inez Kaiser Award. She asked for names of eligible graduate students to be considered for this award.

Susan Gonders announced that the newsletter had now been issued four times per year for four consecutive years, including four *TPR* monographs this past year. The "in situ" feature has added another forum for debate. She said she now has a comprehensive list of Division heads and newsletter editors since 1965, with the exception of 1988-91 newsletter editors. She added that we need to appoint an editor/reviewer for *TPR* for the coming year.

Linda Hon announced that she had received 46 articles for the *Journal of Public Relations Research* this past year, with an initial acceptance rate of 17 percent (does not include articles subsequently revised and accepted). The page increase will occur this year, with the cost passed on to institutional subscribers. She said a special issue concerning "Public relations from the margins" will



John Edelman (above) delivers the keynote speech for the luncheon emceed by Don Stacks (right).



appear soon. Linda Bathgate of Erlbaum Publishing joined Hon in this report and said her company is working to get the journal included in more indexing and abstracting databases. She said the journal is healthy and well supported.

Kirk Hallahan asked members to submit any changes or updates for the Division's website to him via e-mail. He said he will be adding the Division's bylaws and officer descriptions to the site.

Ken Plowman recognized and thanked outgoing officers.

Under old business, Pam Bourland-Davis reported that the past heads group will be serving in an advisory role with an aim to increase Division representation on the AEJMC board. Doug Newsom will lead the group.

Members voted unanimously to support a \$5 increase in annual dues for regular members (does not apply to graduate student dues).

Ken Plowman announced that AEJMC is offering cash incentives to divisions as a reward for increasing membership. He also said a task force is looking into realigning divisions within AEJMC, and that any proposals would be put to a full membership vote.

Pat Curtin reported that "chip" allocations will likely be reduced for next year's convention. She described considerations that will influence programming.

Ken Plowman reported that the Division may adjust the research process to address the growing challenge of increasing paper submissions and too few available judges.

Pat Curtin, incoming head, described her goals for the coming year: increasingly involved members; building external communications, especially with the professional community and other academic groups; and reputation and issues management within AEJMC.

Barbara DeSanto announced that a new edition of PRSA's *Learning to Teach* book would be issued in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Public Relations Division Secretary/Treasurer Alan Freitag.

INCOMING PRD EXECUTIVE MEETING

1 August 2003 • Kansas City, Missouri

THE MEETING was called to order at 7 a.m. by Division Head Pat Curtin, who began with a review of appointed positions, asking for nominations and volunteers. Kirk Hallahan will continue as webmaster. Linda Hon will continue as journal editor. Susan Gonders will continue as newsletter editor. *Teaching Public Relations* reviewer/editor will be Ken Plowman. Meg Lamme and Phyllis Larsen will continue as Roschwalb Award co-chairs. Leah Simone Tuite will continue as Inez Kaiser Award chair, adding Heidi Edwards as co-chair. Lois Boynton will continue as graduate student liaison, adding Cassandra Imfeld, Lori Boyer and Amanda Hall to the committee. Coy Callison and Michael Parkinson will continue as membership co-chairs. Professional liaisons for the coming year will be Bojinka Bishop, Karla Gower, David Guth, Cathy Rogers and Patricia Swann. Larry Lamb will continue as PF&R chair, adding Ernie Martin as co-chair. Research chairs will be Don Stacks (faculty papers), along with Lynn Zock (faculty/student papers), Jennifer Floto (student papers), and Lisa Fall (teaching papers). Elected delegate will be Andi Stein. Ken Plowman will head the nominating committee.

Alan Freitag discussed the Division's listserv and how to use it effectively.

Board members agreed that more specificity is needed in the calls for papers. Board members agreed that there is a need to revisit categorical divisions for research and teaching papers; Don Stacks will lead the effort.

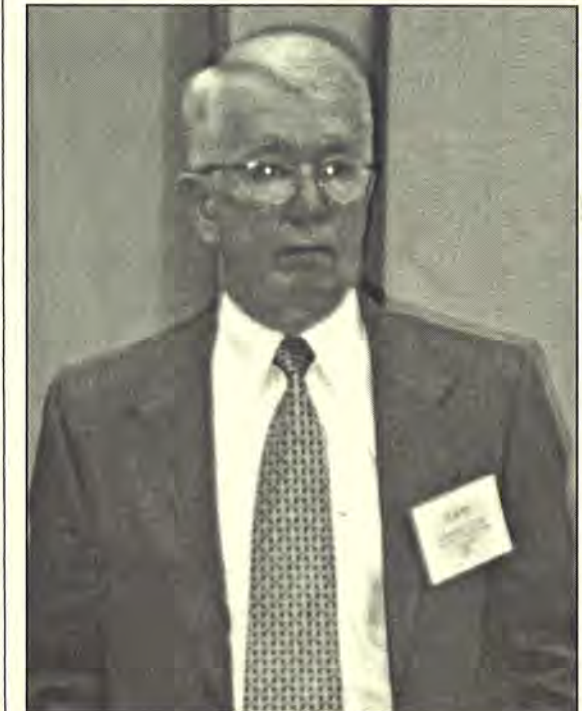
Pat Curtin said she had received no feedback yet from the AEJMC board on the Division's annual report.

Pat Curtin reported that an AEJMC task force is looking at a possible realignment of divisions and interest groups, with a board vote likely next week. Curtin said we will use the newsletter and listserv to keep PRD members informed on progress and developments. She noted that Division members had approved a \$5 annual dues increase. She welcomed the establishment of a past heads group. She also encouraged incoming board members to attend AEJMC training sessions Saturday morning for elected and appointed officers.

Kirk Hallahan reminded board members that bylaws and officer descriptions would be added to the website.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Public Relations Division Secretary/Treasurer Alan Freitag.



Larry Lamb chairs the PRD PF&R program. The report he wrote on the Division's 2002-03 activities earned AEJMC's highest recognition.

Help make the 2004 Toronto convention memorable!

AEJMC convention programming happens because people like you propose ideas for panels. Have a topic of interest? Something you always wanted to hear discussed? Something you want to know more about or think others should be more aware of? Propose a panel on the subject. It's easy.

How do panels go from proposals to programming?

In the fall, each division and interest group of AEJMC gathers panel proposals, which are then put in a book and sent to the person in charge of convention programming for that group. At the mid-winter meeting, held the first weekend of December, the negotiation begins to establish which

VICE HEAD and
PROGRAMS CHAIR

Teresa Mastin

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proposals will become conference programs. Because each division and interest group has a limited number of "chips" (programming slots), we try to team with other groups so that a session will cost us only half of a chip.

Such teamwork allows us to offer more programming by making our chips go farther.

Hints for proposing a successful panel:

Be sure the panel topic has a broad appeal across divisions, or that it has a strong appeal within the PR Division, or that it ties in to the conference theme (TBA), to timely issues or to issues associated with the geographic location of the convention.

If I propose a panel, what am I committing to?

You can simply submit an idea – then wash your hands of any further commitment. Or you can decide to take the lead in organizing the panel and obtaining panelists. Your degree of involvement is up to you. If you decide to be involved, remember that, because we may partner with another group, you will need to be flexible. Often, in the process of pairing, the focus of the panel is slightly changed. You need to go with the flow and work with the other group. Final panel programming will take place at the mid-winter meeting – so expect to hear by the end of the year whether your panel has been accepted and with what group you will be working if you decide to take the lead.

OK – you convinced me. Now what do I do?

Just fill out the form. Type of panel simply means which of AEJMC's three recognized categories you think the subject best falls under. So what's Professional Freedom & Responsibility (PF&R)? Good question. It is used as a catch-all for anything not strictly research or teaching oriented.

What to do with your completed form?

Return it to Teresa Mastin at mastinte@msu.edu or snail-mail a hard copy to 317 Communication Arts, Department of Advertising, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1212, by October 1. Proposals can also be submitted online at <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~aejmcpr/panelproposalform.htm>.

PANEL PROPOSAL

Public Relations Division
2004 AEJMC Convention - Toronto

DUE DATE: OCTOBER 1, 2003

Type of Panel: Research Teaching PF&R

Title/Topic: _____

Possible Panelists: _____

Panel Description: _____

Possible Panel Co-Sponsors:

(mark all that might apply)

DIVISIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Mass Communication & Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Technology & Policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Media Ethics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Theory & Methodology | <input type="checkbox"/> Media Management & Economics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural & Critical Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Minorities & Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio-Television Journalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Scholastic Journalism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Communication |

INTEREST GROUPS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Journalism | <input type="checkbox"/> Media & Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion & Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Science Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internships & Careers | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Programs |

Contact Information:

Your name: _____

Your e-mail: _____

Public Relations Graduates A Survey Across Three Institutions

Diane Atkinson Gorcyca
Missouri Western State College

Charles A. Lubbers
Kansas State University

Marilyn D. Hunt
Missouri Western State College

Pamela Bourland-Davis
Georgia Southern University

ABSTRACT

A total of 183 graduates from three institutions responded to a survey designed to determine what specific public relations functions they use in their present careers. Additionally, respondents indicated which curricular elements best prepared them for their careers. Results indicate that the most frequently used public relations functions center around the issues of strategic planning and implementation. Students from all three institutions rated the public relations campaigns course as the most beneficial in preparing them for future careers. While the vast majority of students had participated in internships while in school, they report only moderate relevance of the internships to their future work and to the field of public relations.

INTRODUCTION

According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000), the number of public relations specialists increased from 162,000 in 1990 to 197,000 in 2000. *U.S. News & World Report* (1997) projected a 55 percent increase in the number by 2006. Johnson and Ross (2000) report that public relations and combined advertising and public relations programs have increased rapidly. Although the increase in numbers is well documented, accurate accounts of professional experiences are difficult to obtain. Because of the variety of titles and job descriptions that prevail, labor reports may not reflect the full extent of public relations practice.

Condino (1987) reports an observed preference for staying in public relations and leaving media and publication work in favor of issues management and policy-making careers. Some practitioners are starting their own firms in search of job security. Based on Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) statistics, it is estimated that the majority of practitioners work in business and commercial corporations. About a third are employed in public relations firms, advertising agencies, or as individual practitioners. The remaining are employed in associations, foundations, educational institutions, health care, government, charitable, religious and other nonprofit organizations (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000).

If *Fortune* magazine (1995) was correct in its placement of public relations among the 20 most rapidly growing industries during the 1990s, where exactly are today's graduates finding employment and what skills are utilized in accomplishing the tactics of public relations?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Public Relations Education and Employment

David Drobis, chair and CEO of Ketchum Public Relations Worldwide, states: "Public relations is no longer a tactic. It's a business strategy. And in five years,

it will be an even more useful business strategy" (Greenberg, *PR Tactics*). Goldman (*PR Strategist*, 1998) predicted the number of communication jobs will increase as we adjust to the technology of the 21st century. PRSA categorizes the functions of a public relations position as involving one or more of the following: programming, cultivating relationships, writing and editing, information, production, special events, speaking, and research and evaluation (www.prsa.org/career/careeroverview.html).

A national study, "Perceptions of Public Relations Education," was conducted in 1998. Educators and practitioners rated the skills of writing news releases, being a self-starter and critical thinking and problem solving as the three most highly desired skill areas. Content areas to be taught in public relations curriculum were: planning, writing, producing and delivering print communication to audiences, setting goals/objectives/strategic planning, ethical and legal credibility, audience segmentation, publicity and media relations, and problem/opportunity analysis.

While the study of the perceptions of public relations education provides an important comparison of the perceptions of educators and professionals, the process left out one group – the student. The current research project was designed to determine if there are differences between institutions. The current project allowed recently graduated students to be part of the process.

USE OF ALUMNI SURVEYS

Alumni surveys have a long history of being used as a strategy employed by education organizations to determine the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum. However, it has only been in recent years that alumni surveys have been used to gather information beyond the evaluation of a specific curriculum. For example, Aviles (2001) discusses how the Career Development Center (CDC) at one institution combined questions related to the use of CDC services with specific questions prepared for alumni by their departments. One of the largest alumni surveys is the annual graduating student survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (Nagle & Bohovich 2000; Nagle, Bohovich & Gold, 2001). These surveys have one distinct limitation – the use of recent graduates. Many of these surveys sample individuals at the time of graduation or within the first few months of graduation. This leads some to question the utility of alumni evaluations of academic programs.

There are examples of superior alumni surveys that do not limit themselves to those who just graduated. One of the most relevant to the current project is the research of Rice, Stewart and Hujber (2000). As a method of assessing instructional effectiveness, their institution turned to surveys of graduates of the Department of Communication one year and 10 years after graduation. Alumni surveys have been used to eval-

TPR submissions are accepted based upon editorial board evaluations of relevance to public relations education, importance to public relations teaching, quality of writing, manuscript organization, appropriateness of conclusions and teaching suggestions, and adequacy of the information, evidence or data presented. Papers selected for the PRD's top teaching session at AEJMC's national convention and meeting TPR's publication guidelines can be published without further review if edited to a maximum of 3,000 words. Authors of teaching papers selected for other PRD sessions are also encouraged to submit their papers electronically for the regular review process. For mail submissions, four hard copies of each manuscript must be submitted. Names of authors should not be listed on the manuscript itself. A detachable title page should include the author's title, office address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. Final manuscript must be in a readable 9-point type or larger and total no more than 3,000 words, including title, author, footnotes, tables, charts and attachments. Upon final acceptance of a manuscript, the author is expected to provide a plain text e-mail version to the *PR Update* editor. Back issues of TPR are available on the PRD website.

<http://lamar.colostate.edu/~aejmcpr>

TPR

Teaching Public Relations

MONOGRAPH 61

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uate and improve the curriculum of programs in nursing (Mawn & Reece, 2000), psychology (Ogletree, 1999; Ogletree, 1998), social work (Simon & Vidal, 1997), and management (Ainsworth & Morley, 1995). Alumni surveys have even been used to evaluate and reform uni-

gram. Specifically, this project was designed to answer these two research questions:

RQ1 – *What specific public relations functions do recent graduates use in their careers?*

RQ2 – *What curricular elements (classes and internships) best prepared them for their careers?*

TABLE 1
Means for Public Relations Tasks

PUBLIC RELATIONS TASK	TOTAL MWSC	KSU	GSU
01 Develop strategy and tactics	1.75	1.43	1.85
02 Set goals and objectives	*1.77	1.29	1.95
03 Correspondence	1.79	1.73	1.80
04 Determine needs, priorities	*1.86	1.39	2.03
05 Program and planning, collaboration	2.09	1.71	2.21
06 Define publics	2.14	1.95	2.13
07 Administer personnel, budgets	2.26	1.95	2.35
08 Manage conflict	2.35	1.84	2.54
09 Meeting guests and visitors	2.36	2.39	2.27
10 Website and other online messages	2.42	2.46	2.43
11 Appear before groups, public speaking	*2.42	2.00	2.55
12 Create communications, multimedia	2.44	2.34	2.42
13 Search Internet	2.45	2.32	2.46
14 Desktop publishing	2.46	2.63	2.41
15 Serve as liaison	2.55	2.25	2.66
16 Arrange news conferences, etc.	2.63	2.70	2.59
17 Develop strategies for critical issues	2.73	2.55	2.77
18 Brochures	2.79	2.77	2.71
19 Change in policy, etc.	2.83	2.66	2.90
20 Consult on crisis communication	2.86	2.80	2.93
21 Newsletters	2.87	2.71	3.01
22 Instruct others on communication, oral and written	2.91	2.68	2.98
23 Speeches	2.96	2.46	3.21
24 Product and technical collateral materials	2.97	2.89	2.99
25 Gather information/public opinion	3.07	2.79	3.20
26 Coach others for public appearances	3.13	2.64	3.41
27 Prepare AV presentation	3.14	2.84	3.27
28 Advise top management	3.16	3.09	3.16
29 Contact media	3.18	3.18	3.23
30 Respond to media requests	3.18	3.04	3.24
31 Conduct research	3.18	2.89	3.36
32 Annual reports	3.20	2.73	3.37
33 Compose print news releases	3.22	3.11	3.42
34 Institutional advertisements	3.25	3.14	3.36
35 Arrange fund-raising events	3.26	3.36	3.34
36 Design research program	3.36	3.23	3.60
37 Compose feature stories	3.41	3.39	3.51
38 Prepare spokespersons	3.41	3.05	3.68
39 Film and slide-show scripts	3.47	3.04	3.72
40 Trade publication articles	3.54	3.45	3.71
41 Audio/video recording and editing	3.59	3.23	3.85
42 Compose broadcast news releases	3.60	3.57	3.73
43 Manage a speakers bureau	3.70	3.64	3.85
44 Hire a research firm	3.92	3.88	4.03

* ANOVA analysis indicated three tasks with statistically significant values of F:

02 Setting goals and objectives	F = 9.724	p > .011
04 Determine needs and priorities	F = 4.186	p > .017
11 Appear before groups, public speaking	F = 10.118	p > .037

versity general education requirements (Klenow, Cummings & Peterson, 1998). The current project is an initial attempt to use the alumni survey method to evaluate public relations education. Additionally, the use of three different programs may allow the results to be more representative than a study of any particular pro-

METHODS

The goal of the research project was to determine the types of work done by recent graduates of public relations programs and to solicit opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their academic preparation. To decrease problems inherent in surveying graduates from a single program, graduates from the following three institutions were surveyed: Georgia Southern University (GSU), Kansas State University (KSU) and Missouri Western State College (MWSC). Efforts were made to select programs housed in both journalism and mass communication (KSU) and communication studies departments (MWSC and GSU). The three programs also differ in the number of specific public relations courses offered (from a low of 1 to a high of 5), size of faculty teaching public relations (also from a low of 1 to a high of 5) and the region of the country.

The results presented in this paper represent only a portion of the data collected in the survey.

Subject Selection/Sampling

Each school prepared a personalized invitation to their former students to complete the survey. Graduates from 1996 to 2000 (inclusive) were asked to participate. Departmental records, alumni lists and personal information were used to create the most complete contact list for each school.

E-mail solicitation and first-class mail was used to encourage students to complete the survey. First-class mail requests included a cover letter and offered the option of completing the survey online or in print form. A print copy of the survey and a prepaid postage return envelope were included with the mailings. E-mail solicitations provided the URL for the web-based survey and also offered the option of having a print copy mailed.

Multiple methods of contact have led to impressive response rates. MWSC had an overall response rate of 65%, and KSU's overall response rate was 54.7%. However, the methods of solicitation garnered different response rates. KSU's response rate for e-mail contact using snowball sampling was 84.3% and for first-class mail was only 25.6%. MWSC collected the majority of its responses online; thus, response rates for mailings were not calculated. GSU is still collecting information at the time this was written, so no response rate can be calculated.

Survey Development

The survey objectives were: (1) to discover what types of jobs PR students hold after graduation; (2) what curricular elements best prepared them for their careers (including internships); (3) what curricular elements would have helped them in their career; and (4) what specific PR functions they use in their careers.

The portion of the survey focused on PR functions was developed based on the listing of work assignments in Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000, pp. 36-37). Some items were revised due to the increased dependence on computer-aided communication. Respondents were asked to identify up to three courses in their undergraduate curriculum that best prepared them for their career. A third portion of the survey asked respondents if they had participated in at least one internship while in

school, and, if so, how relevant that internship was to their current work.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS-PC, version 9.0. Descriptive statistics were used to determine frequencies and means for each of the task functions. ANOVA analysis was used to test for the significance of the differences in the means for the three institutions.

RESULTS

RQ1 – *What specific public relations functions do recent graduates use in their careers?*

Forty-four public relations tasks were listed in the survey. Respondents were asked to indicate for each task on a scale of 1-5 (1-frequently to 5-rarely) how often they used each task. Table 1 lists the overall mean for each task and provides the mean for the three schools involved in the research. The issues of planning and strategy are among the most frequent tasks for all the graduates. Four of the five most frequently used tasks on Table 1 (1-Develop strategy and tactics, 2-Set goals and objectives, 4-Determine needs and priorities, and 5-Program planning and collaboration) represent four of the total of six management tasks included in the list of 44 tasks.

ANOVA analysis was conducted for each of the task functions. Three were significant: giving speeches, setting goals and objectives, needs and priorities. Statistical significance highlights important differences in the means for the three schools. The low number of tasks with significant differences (n=3, 6.8%) is an indication that graduates of the three programs are reporting similar use of the tasks, despite the differences in the programs. Two of the three tasks with statistically significant differences are in the top five in terms of frequency of use, and they both represent management activities.

RQ2 – *What curricular elements (classes and internships) best prepared them for their careers?*

To answer this question the respondents were asked which college courses best prepared them for their present career. Since each of the three schools employs a different curriculum for undergraduate education, the choices may be clearer if presented as a ranking of the classes most frequently identified. The top choices, by school, are presented in Table 2.

The differences between programs in terms of their classes with "public relations" in the title are clearly evident in the results on Table 2. Additionally, two courses offering similar content may have different titles. For example, GSU's third class, desktop publishing, offers content split and combined with other topics in the second and third most important courses at KSU (editing and design and public relations techniques).

The survey also asked if the respondent had participated in an internship during the college career. They were asked to indicate if the internship was relevant, on a 1-5 scale with 1 as highly relevant, to their future work in their careers and also to public relations itself. The responses are presented in Table 3.

DISCUSSION

The similarities of the PR functions between graduates of three separate, and divergent, programs indicates there are common tasks across a wide spectrum of careers. Table 1 results clearly indicate that the most commonly identified tasks are management activities. All six of the management tasks identified in the task list are found among the top seven choices based on fre-

quency of use. Public relations graduates are being asked to perform management and administrative activities.

While respondents from all three schools indicated frequent use of these activities, MWSC graduates were sufficiently different from the KSU or GSU graduates, which led to statistical significance on ANOVAs for two of the management functions: setting goals and objectives and determining needs and priorities. A nonquantitative review of the survey responses offers one answer. MWSC graduates typically work at smaller organizations/businesses. They may be responsible for more of the planning development functions earlier, since there are so few people involved.

The results of the task functions associated with the present jobs explains the hierarchy of courses the respondents indicated best prepared them for their present career (Table 2). The respondents from all three schools clearly selected the public relations campaigns course as the top choice. In this course, undergraduate students obtain first-hand experience with establishing goals and objectives and developing strategies. Also, choices by the graduates reflect the particular emphasis of the different schools. Kansas State University houses public relations education within the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The choices of writing, editing and design, and news and features writing demonstrates the strong journalistic tradition of the program. Georgia Southern's public

TABLE 2
Courses that best prepared students for their career

Missouri Western
Public Relations Campaigns
Organizational Communication
Public Speaking
Nonverbal Communication
Interpersonal Communication
Marketing and Promotions

Kansas State
Public Relations Campaigns
Editing and Design
Public Relations Techniques
News and Feature Writing
Public Relations Writing
Public Relations Case Studies
Mass Communication Research

Georgia Southern
Public Relations Campaigns
Public Relations Writing
Desktop Publishing
Research
Marketing/Event Planning
Organizational Communication

TABLE 3
Internships and relevancy

	All respondents	MWSC	KSU	GSU
Percent participated in internships	86%	55%	99%	100%
Relevance to future work	2.37	1.82	2.65	2.59
Relevance to public relations work	2.25	1.64	2.65	2.21

relations program is housed in the Communications Department, as is the program at Missouri Western State College. Students from these two programs indicated more traditional communication courses (organizational communication, small groups, interpersonal).

The conclusions of the 1998 survey of Public Relations Education are supported by the responses of graduates in terms of task functions. The three most highly desired skill areas of writing news releases, being a self-starter, and critical thinking and problem solving are clearly utilized by these practitioners. The seven most frequently used functions depend upon an individual's organizational abilities and problem-solving abilities for successful completion. Similar results occur when comparing the content areas valued in public relations curriculums. The ability to engage in strategic planning and execution clearly is the desired result of a public relations education.

Internships are a highly desired element of today's public relations curriculum. While students may evaluate the internship as not highly relevant to their present career (see Table 3), many students indicate that the internship demonstrated what career choices they did not want to make. Future research may focus on this

"career screening" function of internships. Additionally, future research may determine if the number of internships, the length of internships, and/or if requiring internships are correlated with perceived importance of internships.

Respondents were asked to indicate their present job position. The only commonality across the career choices is the lack of students who work at large advertising and public relations firms. Most of the graduates are working in public relations for a specific business or corporation. The most common designations for the careers included communications specialist, development director, marketing and promotions specialist, and account executive.

A sample of the job titles includes director of development for a not-for-profit agency, community relations assistant, sales manager, employment and training representative, marketing and promotion specialist, events coordinator for an association, director of sports information/publications, director/coach at the high school

level, tourism and public relations manager, publicity writer and public relations coordinator. The variety of jobs titles listed by the respondents questions the validity as to the estimates of professionals working with the area of public relations. If one goes beyond the traditional designation of public relations in the job title, the number of professionals in public relations may be at significantly higher level than previously assumed.

This research project highlighted one problem area for all three institutions: the tracking of graduates is woefully inadequate. We cannot depend upon the alumni office to keep in contact with graduates. Individual departments need to develop strategies for alumni contact. The increased use of electronic communications is simplifying the process, yet specific plans need to be designed and implemented in order to accomplish the purpose. It is through graduates of a program that evaluation of the elements of the curriculum can be determined.

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IN SITU RESEARCH

EXTENDING PUBLIC RELATIONS' TRADITIONAL ROLE

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After several colleagues and I had presented papers during a session of the AEJMC convention in Kansas City, Dean Kruckeberg posed a very challenging question. My paper concerned the status and effectiveness of employee benefits communication. Our research confirmed that this is an area dominated by the human resources division in most organizations and suggested that increased public relations involvement might help improve the quality of materials and approaches to this function. Dr. Kruckeberg asked whether we in public relations ought to insinuate ourselves into organizational functions outside our prescribed arena. Shouldn't we simply let well enough alone rather than invite the ire of our colleagues in human relations? His point is an excellent one.

Dr. Kruckeberg's subsequent remarks made it clear he was not diminishing the importance of our research. On the contrary, he was commending the extension of our discipline's parameters into arenas in which we can genuinely contribute to organizational excellence and effectiveness. The need, he implied, is to provide persuasive arguments, based on research, for public relations involvement in facets of an organization outside our traditional role, leading to a less parochial understanding of the value we bring.

Our research into employee benefits communication is one example. The surveys, focus groups and other techniques we used resulted in abundant data we will continue to mine, analyze and report. Our AEJMC paper focused on channels of communication in use, the growth and effectiveness of online approaches, the use of unmediated materials from vendors, and so forth. Moreover, results stressed the criticality of benefits packages to recruiting, retaining and motivating quality employees. The Workplace Resource Learning Center calculates that replacing an employee who has a high school education costs \$14,000, and replacing a college graduate costs around \$66,000 – for recruiting, retraining and lost productivity. The Harvard Business School has found that replacing a sales representative can cost three times the annual salary -- \$180,000 for a representative with a \$60,000 annual salary. While employers may relish the short-term savings realized by switching from printed to online benefits materials, the loss of just one employee, at least partially attributed to benefits frustration, would easily negate a savings of a few dollars per employee resulting from the switch to online methods. Thus armed, a public relations director, in concert with the human relations director, can recommend avenues to improve benefits communication, linking the effort to deep, long-term savings in personnel costs. That's a real contribution to organizational excellence and prosperity.

Opportunities for public relations contributions extend beyond human relations as well. I recall a staff meeting during my Air Force career when I was serving as public affairs (public relations) counsel. During the meeting, the director of aircraft maintenance raised a concern regarding a number of minor shop accidents related to a new repair procedure and said he was looking into the problem. After the meeting, I met with the director, talked through the issue, and suggested there was a considerable communication component to the problem. We developed a communication plan that ultimately contributed to significant reductions in accidents, and the director subsequently consulted with our office on several occasions to ensure communication was a part of his approach to other issues. Those of you with practical experience probably can relate similar episodes.

Of course, I missed a lot of opportunities over the years as well. In hindsight, there were too many times when I remained within my public relations comfort zone rather than risk involvement and failure. Was that the case, I wonder, with Enron? With Worldcom? With ImClone? With Ford and Firestone during the Explorer rollover and tire recall debacle? Where was the boldness and conviction of public relations counsel at those times when sound judgment and sagacious advice might have diminished error and embarrassment? This is an area where we can help elevate our discipline's reputation.

Dr. Kruckeberg's question needs to be taken as a challenge to intensify our research efforts, founded on and building upon theory, in order to equip practitioners to convince organizational leaders of the value of our service in areas beyond the traditional. Further, we need to graduate professionals capable of recognizing moments when their judgment may be crucial, even when it means stepping beyond the narrow definition of their responsibilities.

In this issue's in situ column, Alan Freitag of the University of North Carolina-Charlotte reflects on the fading line that separates traditional public relations functions from the role so many PR practitioners fill as their organizations' most highly trained communication specialist. Like Dr. Freitag, my campaigns students increasingly find that they are often the most logical talents to attack management problems that have communication components. To solve the problem of ski resort employees letting their friends into the resort for free, one of my students suggested incorporating scanner technology. The information collected allowed her to track customer demographics more thoroughly, which let her direct the resort's advertising dollars to more logical market segments. Good public relations use, right? However, that use of the scanner's information, as valuable as it was, was not nearly as important as the breaking news that, as the number of customers skiing the resort's downhill runs plunged, the company's primitive snowboarding course, the only one in the area, was rapidly becoming the resort's leading attraction. Her recommendation: investigate building a new snowboarding run to capture a teenaged and young adult audience that could be generating revenue for years to come. So is it public relations, or marketing, or... merely communication competency in an organizational setting? Dr. Freitag has some thoughts on the matter.

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The Public Relations Division's in situ research provides a forum for us to share and refine ideas and to discover collaborators. If you would like to write an in situ research note of 300-500 words, or if you would like to comment on a topic previously published in this forum, send a plain-text e-mail to 5SGonders@hotmail.com.

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CALL FOR HELP WITH BIO INFORMATION

We need help compiling bio-sketches on the following Heads & Eds:

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PAST DIVISION HEADS

Pamela Bourland-Davis (2000-01) organized the Division's first meeting of the Past Heads Council, which convened in Kansas City.

During their first meeting, the Past Heads Council elected **Douglas Ann Newsom (1974-75, left)** to be their chair.

Donald K. Wright (1981-82, below) is welcomed to the **Bill Adams/Edelman Luncheon** by **Ken Plowman (2002-03)** and **Patricia Curtin (2003-04)**. Wright spoke remembrances of Adams (1997-98) at the luncheon.



Barbara DeSanto (1999-00, above) congratulates her North Carolina-Charlotte colleague, **Alan Freitag**, on his election to the PRD board. DeSanto's JLIID mentor is **Elizabeth Toth (1987-88, left)**. DeSanto is one of the seven fellows in the third class of the AEJMC/ASJMC Journalism and Mass Communication Leadership Institute for Diversity. Gannett Foundation funding is helping JLIID meet its mission to increase the number of women and people of color who serve as chairs, deans, directors and endowed chairs.



in Memoriam

Mike Perkins, Brigham Young University Department of Communications chair, died in a kayaking accident at the beginning of the semester. He came to Brigham Young two years ago after serving as associate dean at Drake University. He had just begun a term as head of AEJMC's Law Division.

Contact Pat Curtin if you are interested in serving as appointed delegate.
Contact Ken Plowman if you are interested in serving on the Nominating Committee.

ERLBAUM TO SPONSOR ROSCHWALB AWARD AS PRD MEMBERS CONTRIBUTE SUPPORT

LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, Inc., publisher of the *Journal of Public Relations Research*, has generously offered to sponsor the Susanne A. Roschwalb Award. The annual gift will cover the competitive award of \$250 granted each year to a student conducting research in international public relations. Our sincere thanks go to Lawrence Erlbaum and to Linda Bathgate, LEA senior editor, communications, for their thoughtful commitment to developing public relations scholarship.

This gift comes on the heels of an outpouring of generosity from the PR Division at the members meeting in Kansas City. Upon hearing that the fund was rapidly depleting, despite the support of a number of donors each year, members began pulling out their wallets and their checkbooks, contributing more than \$500 by the end of the meeting. By August 23, together with a few IOUs, the 2003 donations had grown to more than \$650, bringing the total fund to \$2,928. In the future, with Erlbaum's support, we hope to grow the account to the \$6,000 threshold necessary for it to be self-sustaining.

Many thanks go to donors Lois Boynton, Coy Callison, Pat Curtin, Barbara DeSanto, David Guth, Linda Hon, Dianna Knott, Dean Kruckeberg, Larry Lamb, Meg Lamme, Phyllis Larsen, Chuck Lubbers, Charles Marsh, Ernie Martin, Bonita Dostal Neff, Brad Rawlins, Theresa Russell-Loretz, Shirley Serini, Dulcie Straughan, William Thompson and Judy VanSlyke Turk. We apologize if we have omitted your name and hope you will let us know if we have.

And, of course, we should further recognize Judy VanSlyke Turk, who initiated the idea and started collecting for the fund, and Linda Scanlan, whose stock contribution valued at approximately \$2,270 has kept the fund viable.

The winner of the 2003-04 award is Katerina Tsetsura, a doctoral student at Purdue University, who, with the help of her Roschwalb grant, traveled to five cities in Russia in August to interview women practicing public relations.

Donors wishing to support the Roschwalb fund and students conducting research in international public relations and wishing to apply for the 2004-05 award are invited to visit the PR Division website for more information.

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