

# PR UPDATE

The newsletter for AEJMC's Public Relations Division

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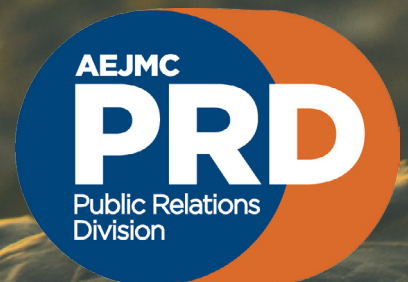


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# PR UPDATE

Vol. 55, No. 1; March 2020

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**editor's note:**

**Brandi Watkins**

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## You've Got This

We were halfway through spring break when the email hit inboxes across Virginia Tech - we're going online for the rest of the semester and you have a week to convert your face-to-face classes to online. I'm sure many of you can relate to the mad scramble to learn new technology, revise schedules, record lectures and reassure students (when we are not totally sure ourselves how this is going to turn out).

I spent more time on Twitter last week and what I saw inspired me. Academics from across disciplines were sharing their best tips for how to teach online and adapt to the new challenge set before us. Experienced online teachers created YouTube videos demonstrating how to use Zoom. People were reassuring each other with tweets of encouragement or silly gifs and memes as a sign of solidarity and that we are not in this alone.

Academia can be hard sometimes. We are always under pressure to do more with less. While more often than not we find that frustrating, I think it has also helped us to be more resilient and creative people. That's what our universities, students and communities need from us right now. And as we have done many times before, I know we will show up for whoever needs us most.

Despite this issue coming out a little later than usual, I hope you will find the content helpful. We planned this issue to help you prepare for submitting to AEJMC including a call for papers and tips for first time submitters.

Hang in there everyone, and hopefully we will see each other in San Francisco in August. Until then, stay inside and wash your hands!

PR UPDATE is published three times a year.  
You can find past issues [here](#).

Please send all inquiries and contributions to  
[brandi1@vt.edu](mailto:brandi1@vt.edu)



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## A message from the Division Head

### Dustin Supa

Boston University

## A Time to Support Each Other

I had intended to use my space in this issue of the newsletter to discuss the important role of self-determination, particularly with regard to how we, as public relations educators, must often strike a balance between the professional preparation of our students with the necessary foundations of theory, research and the liberal arts. Perhaps my next column will have the opportunity to opine, hopefully with some grace, on this important aspect of higher education in public relations. The advantage of procrastination with a deadline, though, is the ability to adopt the latest information, and in some cases, to change topics. And quite unfortunately, there is a topic out there that needs to be addressed.

Right now, many of our colleagues, students, friends and families are being impacted by COVID-19, the novel coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, but has since resulted in a global pandemic. Many of our colleges and universities have cancelled or recalled students from study abroad, and increased travel restrictions may limit both ours and our colleague's ability to travel to upcoming conferences. It may mean that some of our international students will be unable to return home this summer, or if they do, they may risk being unable to return in the fall. It may also mean that students who would have joined our programs in the fall, both graduates and undergraduates, may not be able to do so. We must all keep those affected in our thoughts.

We can be hopeful that before long a solution, in the form of either containment or a vaccine, comes to fruition. But institutions of higher education, many of which are

reliant on student tuition to fund activities such as travel to conferences, scholarships and the numerous activities which are a part of everyday university life, are already beginning to prepare for a scenario where a significant number of students may be unable to enroll or attend classes. Given the number of leaders in our division, I'm sure many of you have been or will be involved in your campus' efforts.

I would encourage us to have a conversation about our home institutions' efforts with each other, to share ideas from our own programs which might help benefit others. After all, while our individual programs may be competitive in various sports, for magazine rankings or for students – there are also times when we must collaborate, share our ideas and offer support to each other. AEJMC, and in particular the Public Relations Division, is an incredible organization, not only because we hold great conferences, offer insightful research or provide opportunities for our members – but incredible because we are first and foremost a community of people dedicated to our students, to the field and most importantly, to each other.

In a 2012 interview, Harold Burson said “Building a network is a lot more than knowing people, it's about interacting with people and building relationships so that when you need help...the people you've been closest to are going to help you the most” (Schaefer). As we continue to monitor the situation around COVID-19, I hope that our PRD network will answer the call to help out where needed.



# committee updates

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## **JPRE Special Issue Call for Papers: Teaching Public Relations Ethics**

Deadline: June 15, 2020

In 2017, the Commission on Public Relations Education issued a report “Fast Forward: Foundations and Future State. Educators and Practitioners” that recommended all public relations programs require an ethics course with a focus on public relations in their curriculum. A follow-up report in spring 2020 provided general recommendations for the content of this new course and attempted to gather a range of sample activities. The importance of developing and offering a public relations ethics course was greater emphasized by CEPR’s modified requirements for public relations accreditation. Programs must have a required public relations ethics course in their curriculum in order to maintain accreditation (or to receive it) in the coming years.

Current curriculum in public relations ethics covers a broad range of topics including codes of ethics, crisis and ethics, digital ethics, transparency, corporate social responsibility, diversity, ethical cultures, and global ethics. This special issue will contribute to our understanding of

these topics as well as introduce other topics and ideas to consider in the development of curriculum.

The call for papers seeks submissions that will help public relations programs build and integrate a successful public relations ethics course. Two types of submissions are sought: 1) research projects that share empirical evidence of ethics education and teaching effectiveness, and 2) teaching briefs that share classroom activities to be used in a public relations ethics course.

Of particular interest are research projects that explore the most important and relevant topics in public relations ethics and offer insights into effective teaching in the classroom. Teaching briefs that provide some evidence of effectiveness are also prioritized.

Contact Denise Bortree ([dsb177@psu.edu](mailto:dsb177@psu.edu)) for questions or more information about this issue.

## **PRD Mentorship Program**

Everyone needs advice and assistance from time to time about navigating academia. PRD’s mentorship program offers doctoral students, junior and senior faculty the opportunity to pair up throughout the academic year. Applications to participate in the program will go out early summer.

Mentors and mentees will be pair up based on shared interests such as the desire to discuss pedagogical or research experiences.

For more information about the mentorship program, please contact Melissa Adams ([adamsmb2@appstate.edu](mailto:adamsmb2@appstate.edu)).

## PR's Responsibility in a World of Misinformation

NC Public Relations Society of America's February newsletter  
| February 6, 2020 | Reprinted with permission

The tragic recent deaths of Kobe Bryant, his daughter and seven other people in a helicopter crash underscored how damaging the simple act of communicating can be when it lacks ethics and accuracy. Digital media's breakneck pace of reporting meant that getting the story first trumped not only getting it right but what many would regard as basic human decency.

When a friend texted the TMZ article, I immediately checked CNN, which was reporting the crash but not the names. I suspected then that the families had not been notified, a hunch born out hours later when the local sheriff's office confirmed that Bryant's wife and the other families learned of their loved ones' deaths from the media.

While mainstream outlets showed more restraint in their rush to report the news, they weren't without fault. ABC released an erroneous report that all four of Bryant's daughters had been killed. As should have been expected, social media was also a source of misinformation that former Bryant teammate Rick Fox had been on board. Less damaging were inaccurate reports that the NBA was cancelling all Sunday games and even a video of a 2018 helicopter crash in the United Arab Emirates that was shared as the crash that killed Bryant and the others.

Misinformation, which can include any false or misleading statements, including those made in good faith, is becoming increasingly problematic. According to the 2019 Institute for Public Relations Disinformation in Society report, 63% of Americans view disinformation as a major problem in society, on par with gun violence (63%) and terrorism (66%).

Many fault the media in the case of the Kobe Bryant story, but misinformation is a PR problem. While it's doubtful that anything would have stopped TMZ from acting, a PR professional may have kept a tighter lock on what was confidential information until the families were notified.

PR pros, such as celebrity spokespersons, did play a role in clearing up the erroneous reports coming from ABC or making the rounds on social media. But they played a reactive role; had they been able to get ahead of the story, they could have prevented or short-circuited much of the chaos.

And in that is the lesson for us all. The guidance we provide during a crisis starts with taking a deep breath, slowing down and verifying the facts. Our job is to stop the rush to react, or as NBA TV Host Jared Greenberg pleaded: "PLEASE STOP spreading 'news' unless you personally can confirm it!"

Society's general mistrust of the news should compel us all to pitch and prepare well-researched stories, increasing our emphasis on fact-checking. Countering misinformation is a growing challenge, but it doesn't really change our core responsibilities as PR professionals, which is to communicate effectively and truthfully with their audiences.

In addition to being accurate and forthcoming, we must constantly monitor news and social media to catch and correct misinformation. Had someone been monitoring social media more closely on January 26, Rick Fox's daughter may not have had to go through the agony of believing her father dead.

We are blessed to live in a time when so much information can be so easily and quickly accessed. But with that blessing comes a deep responsibility to ensure that we hold ourselves and others to a high standard of ethics and accuracy in communications.

Connie Helmlinger, APR  
President, North Carolina Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America  
Manager of Public Relations and Marketing, NC Housing Finance Agency



# AEJMC updates

Photo by Samuel Myles on Unsplash

## Prepare Your Paper Now for AEJMC 2020

By Lois Boynton, UNC-Chapel Hill

Join the competition! The online portal is open for you to submit original, completed research papers that advance public relations theories and practices in one of three categories: open, student, or teaching.

We welcome all recognized research methods and citation styles that test, refine, or expand public relations theory or practice; critically review issues relevant to public relations theory and research; or explore methods of effective public relations practice. Teaching papers should test, refine, or expand principles or practices associated with public relations pedagogy. Papers should include appropriate literature review, methodology, findings and discussion. Research proposals or reports on research in progress are not eligible.

### Know the Rules

Submitters should carefully review the instructions for the Public Relations Division as well as the general requirements contained in the AEJMC Uniform Paper Call – also see your January AEJMC News, accessible at [aejmc.org](http://aejmc.org). These rules and regs help maximize participation for the growing number of members wanting to share their research.

First, you may submit no more than two papers across the PRD's three categories. If an author and/or co-author submits more than two manuscripts, all the submissions will be automatically disqualified. Any paper you submit to the PR Division competition may not simultaneously be under review in another AEJMC division, another conference, or for publication in a journal or book.

Student papers must be authored or co-authored by students ONLY (no faculty co-authors), and all student papers must have the word "STUDENT" on the title page and in the running head.

Please pay attention to these formatting requirements. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in an automatic disqualification of the paper.

- All papers must be submitted in PDF format.
- A paper cannot exceed 25 pages excluding 75-word abstract, references, and figures and tables placed at the end of the paper.
- Papers must be typed in a 12-point font, using Times New Roman, Times, or Arial font.
- Text must be double-spaced with 1-inch margins on all sides of the document; references may be single spaced, with a double space between citation entries.
- All papers must contain continuous page numbers.

Before submitting your paper, please make certain you remove all author-identifying information in the paper text and document file properties; ensure your self-citations do not reveal your identity. Inclusion of identifying information will result in automatic disqualification of the paper.

### Submitting Your Paper

Once your paper is ready for submission, head to the AEJMC page ([aejmc.org](http://aejmc.org)) and click on the All-Academic button, or go directly to the [All Academic website](#). All authors and co-authors must register in the All-Academic

## Prepare Your Paper Now for AEJMC 2020

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system. Please note that you must create a new login for the 2020 conference.

When submitting co-authored papers, please ensure all authors grant permission to submit the paper. Paper authorship cannot be added, deleted, or changed after submission.

Additionally, at least one author of an accepted faculty paper must attend the conference to present the paper. If student authors cannot be present, they must arrange for someone else to present. Failure to be present or provide a presenter for any paper will result in a one-year ban on the

review of papers for all authors involved.

Authors of accepted papers are required to forward papers to discussants and moderators prior to the conference. Presentations at AEJMC conference may be disseminated via social media; presenters may opt out of social media dissemination by requesting so at the time of presentation.

Deadline for paper submissions is **April 9, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. CDT**; however, we encourage you to submit a day or two before the deadline in the event of technical glitches.

## PRD Paper Award Opportunities

By Lois Boynton, UNC-Chapel Hill

We're lucky to have exceptional supporters and donors who ensure the top three papers in each of the categories receive monetary awards.

Thanks to a generous gift from **Dennis Wilcox**, professor emeritus, San José State University, top papers in open and teaching categories will be awarded \$750 for the top paper, \$500 for second place, and \$250 for third place. Top papers will also receive priority processing in the Journal of Public Relations Research, and top teaching papers will receive priority processing in the Journal of Public Relations Education, provided they are submitted by December 31, 2020.

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.

In addition, we will award the **Doug Newsom Award** for the top paper that fits the theme of global ethics and diversity. The \$250 award was created in honor of Doug Newsom, Professor Emeritus, Texas Christian University.

Those who wish to compete for this award should submit to the appropriate category and clearly label their papers for award consideration. A special committee will evaluate the papers and choose a finalist.

**The Museum of Public Relations** will award \$250 for the best paper about the role of public relations in history. The historical figures do not need to self-identify as public relations people and can include social and political movement leaders. People who are not typically cited in public relations textbooks are of interest. Please clearly label your paper for award consideration. A special committee will evaluate the papers and choose a finalist.

Questions? Please contact research chair **Holly Overton**, University of South Carolina, [overton@sc.edu](mailto:overton@sc.edu), or research vice-chair **Hyejoon Rim**, University of Minnesota, [hrim@umn.edu](mailto:hrim@umn.edu)

And, thanks to Chris McCollough, Columbus State University, and Melissa Janoske McLean, University of Memphis, for serving as Teaching and Graduate Student Competition co-chairs.



## Tips for first-time submitters to the AEJMC PR Division

By Luke Capizzo, Ph.D., APR, James Madison University

Worried about getting your research ready to submit for AEJMC this year? Fear not. While the process may seem daunting, the AEJMC Public Relations Division welcomes scholarship from new voices and perspectives. Following a few easy tips will help anyone—particularly those new to the division—avoid some common pitfalls.

### Tip #1: Know the categories

AEJMC PRD has three submission categories, so understanding where your work would best fit is crucial. Student-only papers should, generally, be submitted in the student category. If papers are written by faculty members or students are co-authoring with faculty, they may select either the open (general) or teaching category, if the research is pedagogical in nature. Choose wisely! And ask a senior colleague in the division or a member of the [research committee](#) if you are unsure.

### Tip #2: Follow the (sometimes pesky) rules

While the submission details and procedures may not be intuitive, they each serve an important purpose. First-time submitters should always double-check the following (1) authorship (have all agreed to the authorship order and to submit this piece to the conference?), (2) avoiding simultaneous review (the manuscript cannot be under review or published in other venues during the review process), (3) length (25 pages excluding references, tables, graphics, etc.) and (4) blinding (removing all records of authorship from the document and the file properties prior to uploading). Additional formatting details and guidelines, found in the [2020 PRD Call for Papers](#), should be used as a checklist before submission.

### Tip #3: Cite PR scholars

First-time submitters should ensure their work speaks to topics, theories, and methods relevant to PR scholars

in the division, and lets reviewers know this through citations. Look to the division's sessions in past conference programs and PR journals, particularly the AEJMC-affiliated journals ([Journal of Public Relations Research](#) and [Journal of Public Relations Education](#)) to ensure your work joins ongoing conversations in the field. The good news is that public relations has a large tent of research methods (quantitative, qualitative, and rhetorical) as well as subject matter, with a rich and diverse history of scholarship.

### Tip #4: Just get it in :)

While we should all aspire to collect the best-possible data, analyze it in an appropriately thorough fashion, and write as clearly as possible, we should not let imperfections stand in the way of submitting. Think of your paper as a draft you are submitting for expert feedback. Get it in!



## Call for Paper Reviewers

By Lois Boynton, UNC-Chapel Hill

Faculty members – please join a cadre of other exceptional colleagues reviewing submissions for the open, teaching, and student competitions. Your expertise is vital to make the competition run smoothly. If you are interested in serving as a reviewer, please sign up by **March 30**. Here's what to do:

First, complete this brief reviewer interest survey – <https://forms.gle/SCHk9MhWda84YiMN9> - so we can assign papers that best match your areas of topical and methodological expertise.

Second, make sure you've signed up at the [All-Academic 2020 website](#).

Our goal is to get assigned papers to you by April 13. Please complete and submit your reviews on the All-Academic website by May 13.

Need an incentive? We will salute our most-outstanding reviewers who provide timely feedback and the most-helpful and substantive comments to authors.

If you have questions, please contact our co-chairs, Holly Overton at [overton@sc.edu](mailto:overton@sc.edu) or Hyejoon Rim at [hrim@umn.edu](mailto:hrim@umn.edu).

## AEJMC to Accept Extended Abstract Submissions for 2020 Conference

Brandi Watkins, Virginia Tech

AEJMC announced that it would accept extended abstracts in addition to full papers in all divisions and interest groups for the 2020 conference. Authors should consider submitting an extended abstract if they are far along enough in the research process to include the study's purpose, literature review, research questions and/or hypotheses, method, findings and discussion/conclusion.

For authors considering submitting an extended abstract, AEJMC has provided the following guidelines on its [website](#):

- Abstracts must be at least 750 words and no more than 1,500 words. A 75-word (max.) summary of the abstract should precede the abstract itself. References and summary are excluded from the work count.
- Data collection and analysis should be at least 75% in order to meaningfully report tentative findings and

conclusions.

- When submitting an extended abstract, authors must include the words "Extended Abstract" at the start of their paper title (e.g., "Extended Abstract: [Paper Title]"). Submissions not appropriately labeled may be rejected.
- Other than the extended abstract format (including length differences) and ineligibility for award competitions, all other [AEJMC Uniform Paper Guidelines apply](#).

Extended abstracts should be uploaded to the AEJMC All-Academic site as a single file by the conference deadline of April 9, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. CDT. Authors whose extended abstracts are selected for presentation at the conference must still submit their full paper, with all identifying author information, to the All-Academic site by July 15, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. CDT.