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Journal of Public Relations Education Editorial Staff

Note from the Editor-in-Chief:

This particular call for papers related to the impact of COVID-19 on education came at a time when we would not have thought we'd still be in a pandemic response of some version. Special thanks go to Richard Waters, working with Emily Kinsky, in coordinating the call, and the initial work in the curation of the submissions. Their foresight that the pedagogical upheaval might have an impact on future practices was prescient, and so the articles included here are more than capturing a moment of time. In addition to articles discussing campaigns, service learning and PRSSA management, we have an article which describes reflexive-transformative approaches from a university in Australia where flipped learning was already the norm.

Included in this issue, you will find an invited resources article based on one of the virtual AEJMC PRD presentations from spring of 2021. It reviews a number of options such as apps which would help directly address many of the findings from the articles, and I'm working on my list of which ones to incorporate next term.

As I am hearing from many of you via Social Media, we are all still feeling we are working in "catch up" mode. The Journal is no different. While separate from the special issue, you will find our regular book reviews and an article on PRSSA, pre-COVID-19, which was among the last accepted by our previous editor.

Best wishes for the New Year, and here's to new ideas we can integrate into our classes.

Journal of Public Relations Education
Editorial Review Board

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JPRE Editorial Content

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Special Issue: The Unprecedented Upheaval of Public Relations Education

Pivot Now! Lessons Learned From Moving Public Relations Campaigns Classes Online During the Pandemic in Spring 2020

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examined how public relations professors adapted their PR campaigns courses to facilitate online learning in Spring 2020. Emphasis was placed on exploring the distinct or consistent challenges related to modifying coursework, managing student groups, and maintaining client relationships. The study also examined positive outcomes of moving online. Faculty teaching PR campaigns (*N* = 63) participated in a closed- and open-ended question survey exploring their experiences teaching the course. Results suggest that faculty felt compelled to change class components and experienced challenges related to individual student engagement (particularly in groups) and modifying specific components of students' campaigns projects, but had fewer problems managing client relationships. Student access to technology and resources was the biggest barrier to success in campaigns courses. While faculty are embracing lessons learned through the quick shift online, the ability to successfully deliver PR campaigns courses online hinges on bridging digital divides.

Keywords: survey, COVID-19, online teaching, public relations campaigns

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The best organizations are those that can adapt to the changing needs of their stakeholders. The same holds true when considering public relations education. However, few were prepared for the global challenges the emergent COVID-19 pandemic would create in early 2020.

In late January, 2020, the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) declared a global health emergency as thousands of COVID-19 cases began to spread through Asia (Taylor, 2021). By mid-February cases began to rise across Europe, particularly in Italy; by Feb. 29, the first death in the United States was reported. However, the United States was widely criticized for its response to the growing pandemic (Lewis, 2021). In addition to downplaying the severity of the virus, the Trump Administration leaned on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop tests it was ill-equipped to produce and distribute. Even as testing availability expanded, the U.S. dealt with poor tracing and isolation procedures, quarantine and mask-wearing policies, and a decentralized response that placed the power for handling the crisis into the hands of state and local officials. By March 15, the CDC recommended that there be no gatherings of more than 50 people in the U.S. (Taylor, 2021), but by then state governors and local officials had already started exploring regional guidelines for slowing the virus' spread. On March 19, California was the first state to issue stay-at-home orders, followed by dozens of additional states in the coming weeks (Wu et al., 2020).

As the crisis unfolded, educational institutions implemented contingency plans while waiting for guidance from federal and state officials. More than 1,300 colleges and universities across the U.S. shut down, canceling classes and moving instruction online (Smalley, 2021), often with less than two weeks' notice. This created significant interruptions for students related to campus housing and dining, access to technology, resources for travel, and financial aid. In the midst of this upheaval, educators had to adapt in-progress courses for remote delivery. The move to online learning raised concerns about the quality of these courses, the uncertainty of the evolving situation, and the ability for students and faculty to manage the stress associated with the pandemic. For example, Gen Z adults (ages 18-23) were reported as experiencing significantly more stress than other age groups (American Psychological Association, 2020).

While faculty and students generally experienced the same challenges related to the quickly evolving pandemic, anecdotal evidence suggested that faculty teaching public relations campaigns (or similar capstone) courses seemed to experience different challenges than their academic counterparts. For example, specialized challenges appeared to emerge in these classes as students generally engage in collaborative, client-based or service-learning work. Both faculty and students had to be nimble while making decisions about continuing client relationships, identifying whether it was safe to conduct research, confirming whether students had access to the technology and programs needed to complete class assignments, and more. Based on this anecdotal evidence, the purpose of this study was to explore how professors adapted their courses, to identify unique or consistent challenges to that adaptation, and to identify potentially positive curricula changes that emerged from the experience.

Literature Review

Public relations campaigns courses provide distinct experiential learning opportunities designed to prepare students for internships and jobs. These classes are commonly taught in PR programs and often emphasize team-based and service- or client-driven learning opportunities. Because of the approaches normally used to teach campaigns courses, they are often taught as face-to-face classes. As such, the shift to online learning in spring 2020 meant faculty quickly converted their classes into remote delivery, but in a shorter time period than typically needed to develop quality online courses. The history and values of PR campaigns courses are evaluated before pedagogical approaches to groupwork and online learning are explored for context.

Public Relations Campaigns Course

The PR campaigns course has a long-standing history as part of excellent PR education. Even prior to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) *Managing Public Relations* seminal publication, which defined PR as a management function, scholars discussed the importance of the campaigns course. For example, Rings (1983) discussed a theory-based, team-centered course at Boston University that promoted PR as a management function rather than a mere technical function. More recently, Auger and Cho (2016) found that 56% of nearly 250 PR programs included the course, and 22% provided a similar practicum course.

The function of PR campaigns courses is often to prepare students for industry. Scholars have noted "because it is considered the capstone course of PR education, the campaigns class has a multi-faceted obligation to its students" (Benigni et al., 2004, p. 259). Benefits of the campaigns course, which traditionally uses a team-based approach to building a communication campaign for real clients, includes experiential learning outcomes such as managing group dynamics; professional decorum and presentation; establishing goals, objectives and strategies based on research; and determining appropriate tactics and evaluative criteria. Students find value in this learning format, particularly by placing classroom material in context and providing depth of understanding to the concepts of audiences and tactics (Aldoory & Wrigley, 2000). However, challenges related to group-based dynamics suggest that students do not always find the experience of working with clients helpful to "learning about compromise, tolerance, or problem solving" (p. 56).

Outside of PR-specific courses, scholars have examined the concept of the campaigns course from the integrated marketing communication (Moody, 2012), health communication (Neuberger, 2017), and strategic communication perspectives (Anderson, 2018); notably, most of these retain the key characteristics of PR campaigns courses. This includes the use of real clients for whom students identify, research, and analyze a real issue or situation. To do this, they conduct secondary and primary research; create, outline, or execute a plan; then evaluate or indicate evaluative measures for that plan. While some programs use case studies rather than clients, using clients provides students with real-world experience not found through case analysis; arguably, "… students are not properly prepared unless they are thrust into a situation filled with problems and opportunities" (Benigni et al., 2004, p. 262). For example, results from a health communication campaigns class showed that students successfully translated classroom learning to practical application: "Many students could not even identify or define a health campaign at the start of the term. Yet, they end the semester with valuable knowledge and experience" (Neuberger, 2017, p. 147).

Further, client perspectives show the benefits of campaigns classes. Rogers and Andrews (2016) found that nonprofit partners often lacked PR background, arguing that the need to educate community partners about PR expectations directly addresses the definition of best PR practices creating opportunities for mutual benefit (Public Relations Society of America, 2020). This creates a multi-faceted approach to strengthening student experiences while highlighting the need to privilege client perspectives. Further, Kinnick (1999) highlighted that a key benefit to client organizations came in the form of saved expenditure and staff time. Still others have indicated the value of the campaign plan itself to the organization (Benigni et al., 2004) and the value of opportunities to reflect on and analyze their own programs (Aldoory & Wrigley, 2000). Moreover, while clients are infrequently part of the grading process, studies show that clients are generally satisfied with their partnerships, many returning as a client for subsequent semesters or offering internships and other opportunities to students (Benigni et al., 2004).

Fostering Experiential Groupwork

The benefits of teaching PR campaigns courses include creating an environment to practice professional, team-based strategies. In the mid-90s, Blumenfeld et al. (1996) described the power and shortcomings of peer learning, arguing that "results can be positive when close attention is paid to norms, tasks, the mix of participants and their skills, and methods to ensure accountability" (p. 40). Group norms require collaboration and the ability to discuss and compromise on issues; but cooperation is not guaranteed, and evidence suggests that "students often do not behave prosocially" (p. 38). This includes issues related to contributing to the workload and decision making and issues related to interpersonal relationship behaviors. To deter such group dynamics, Blumenfeld et al. (1996) recommend developing meaningful tasks, teaching the art of giving and seeking help, and creating opportunities for accountability. Here, collaboration is a key component of groupwork in the classroom, offering opportunities to build communal knowledge by sharing resources, skills, and insights. However, technological supports must be in place to facilitate this type of learning.

Although the large body of literature exploring the values of collaboration is not explored in depth here, it is worth noting how collaborative learning shapes and informs PR campaigns courses. Kayes et al. (2005) recognized the growing prevalence of teamwork in education and professional work environments and argued that negative team-based experiences can be overcome "when a team intentionally focuses on learning" (p. 331). This involves clearly identifying group characteristics related to purpose, membership, roles, context, process, and action taking (p. 330). Laal and Ghodsi (2012) also illustrated the social, psychological, and academic benefits of collaborative learning. In PR, scholars have examined the influence of groupwork and collaboration in the context of student-run agencies, highlighting the benefits of experiential learning and gaining professional skills (Bush, 2009; Bush et al., 2016; Bush & Miller, 2011). Here, the ability to work in teams is a key skill required in industry, and students in agency-style groups believed they gained numerous professional skills, including soft skills related to people, organizations, and communication (Bush et al., 2016).

The Art of Distance Learning

Understanding the challenges faculty faced during the switch to online learning in Spring 2020 means appreciating the need for and significant effort that normally goes into preparing online courses. Faculty must consider student engagement and course design strategies when adjusting courses for online delivery. And, as Moore (2014) discussed:

> An understanding of effective instruction in online PR courses is necessary as the rising amount of non-resident "distance" students, the economic downturn, and university focus on decreasing costs, increasing revenues, and improving student access have led to an increase in online undergraduate courses offered online. (p. 283)

To begin, existing research highlights the need to consider different opportunities for student engagement. Student engagement occurs at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels (Jones, 2008) and is defined as "the student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (Newmann et al., 1992, as cited in Bolliger & Halupa, 2018, p. 3). Further, research suggests that students perceive online learning positively when there are high levels of engagement and low levels of transactional distance (Bolliger & Halupa, 2018). And while synchronous teaching strategies can lower perceptions of transactional distances, specific learner-to-learner, learner-to-instructor, and learner-to-content strategies can be used to increase engagement (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Such strategies can include the use of icebreakers and collaborative work (learner-to-learner); regular communication and clear assignment instructions (learner-to-instructor); and structured discussion and "real-world projects" (Martin & Bollinger, 2018).

Despite these positive findings, research suggests that the time needed to design and teach online courses is often a barrier to converting face-to-face courses online (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010). Faculty must re-develop courses to bridge instructional design and course organization needs. They must set curriculum, create diverse content delivery and activities, build scaffolded learning opportunities and timelines for group work, and establish netiquette rules (Anderson, 2001). Moreover, scholars recognize that online teaching requires adopting new practices that may be difficult for some faculty members to embrace (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010). Significant responsibility is placed on faculty to learn about new modalities, balance pedagogy and technology, adjust teaching styles, increase communication with students, and recognize benefits and challenges of online learning (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010).

Distance Learning in Public Relations. Prior to the pandemic there was already a need to respond to the "changing PR teaching environment" (Moore, 2014, p. 283); the pandemic seemingly forced this change on educators across disciplines. Understanding the benefits and challenges of online learning as studied in PR, and recognizing best practices in the context of online learning in general, provides insight into the situation faculty faced in Spring 2020. Moreover, it is worth considering the distinct challenges of converting experiential, group-based courses (such as PR campaigns) to online formats.

Moore (2014) provided one of the first studies examining the success of online courses in PR programs. Specifically, she found that student-student communication significantly impacted student success in courses more than student-instructor communication and interaction. As campaigns classes rely on groupwork, this suggests an important aspect of online learning that must be considered when developing such courses. Similarly, Smallwood and Brunner (2017) found that teams working collaboratively on scaffolded, realistic projects experienced better engagement and group success. Increased "interactions and engagement with course material, other students, instructors, and technology" (Smallwood & Brunner, 2017, p. 453) led to more positive student perceptions and outcomes. However, although students are often considered digital natives, that did not ensure comfort with using technology for classwork and class-based communication (Smallwood & Brunner, 2017). Such findings suggest opportunities to successfully convert campaigns classes online, but also highlight the need to consider barriers to student success.

The onset of the pandemic stressed the boundaries of typical student and faculty experiences. While many instructors experienced this shift to online teaching in a two-week period, many students were adapting to online learning for the first time. However, PR education seems to naturally employ best engagement practices as students are often required to collaborate in groups, follow specific strategies to complete work (such as using the planning process to develop campaign plans), and produce projects that emphasize practical outcomes. In the context of the pandemic—and without the usual time needed to meet best online teaching practices—converting campaigns courses arguably provided a distinct challenge for PR faculty.

Research Questions

PR campaigns courses often emphasize experiential learning opportunities designed to build and support client-focused relationships while students work in teams, mimicking professional experiences. And as quality online courses generally require significant preparation, combined with the challenges of converting group-based experiential learning to an online format, this study aimed to explore the distinct challenges that faculty teaching campaigns-style courses may have faced during the switch to online learning. Based on the reviewed literature, this led to the following research questions:

RQ1: What consistent challenges did *professors* teaching PR campaigns courses face converting their classes to an online format?

RQ2: What consistent *student group* challenges were identified by PR professors because of the switch to online learning?

RQ3: How were relationships with PR campaigns *clients* impacted by the unexpected changes brought on by the pandemic?

RQ4: What positive course-related changes emerged from the experience of switching PR campaigns courses online?

Method

To answer the research questions and explore faculty experiences teaching PR campaigns courses at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a 45-question survey was distributed using Qualtrics[1]. The survey was available from June 16-July 1, 2020 to ensure that faculty would have their spring 2020 semester experiences top-of-mind.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling, which primarily occurred via social media channels for PR

1 The richness of data yielded from this survey led the researchers to parse results related to emotional labor. A limited amount of data appearing in this manuscript was replicated in the second, related but different, study. The second manuscript emphasizes a mixed-method approach using exploratory sequential design (Creswell, 2015) and the authors embraced theoretical triangulation to interpret data through multiple perspectives (Tracy, 2013). For transparency, replicated data is identified in the results section.

groups of major conferences including the AEJMC, ICA, and NCA PR divisions. Participants were encouraged to share the survey with colleagues who also taught campaigns-style courses in spring. Of 74 survey responses, $N = 63$ usable responses were retained for analysis. Two participants did not meet the screening requirement of having taught a campaigns PR course in Spring 2020, while $n = 9$ responses were removed because the survey was aborted at launch. Of the retained responses, $n = 14$ were partially completed with completion rates ranging from 24% ($n = 1$) to 69% ($n = 3$); 10 participants (15.87%) completed between 49-69% of the survey.

Survey Design

The researchers launched this study because of their experiences teaching campaigns courses. As such, this exploratory survey was designed based on a mix of personal experience and knowledge about best practices in PR pedagogy. To understand faculty experiences, closed- and open-ended questions were designed to understand previous and current experiences teaching campaigns classes, adjustments made because of the pandemic, and outcomes of those adjustments. Participants were also asked about the number and types of classes taught and basic demographic information.

First, faculty were asked about *adjustments made to their courses* due to the pandemic. This included questions related to previous experience teaching online or hybrid courses, time available to convert classes online, strategies used to determine best formats for the class, and which platforms and tools were used to deliver the course online.

Next, respondents were asked to reflect on the nature and quality of their *client relationships* and how those may have changed because of the pandemic. This included understanding whether relationships changed and how, and what client-based factors may have influenced changes to the partnerships.

Because the switch to online learning was quite sudden, questions explored what *course component adjustments* faculty may have made to facilitate learning. This included exploring whether changes were made (a) to their classes in general, and (b) to the client-based projects, specifically.

As campaigns courses often emphasize groupwork, the need for flexibility, and a guide-on-the-side approach to teaching, faculty may have faced specific challenges related to converting their classes online. As such, questions explored *challenges faced in the course*, *content-related issues*, and *group-related issues*. Course-related challenges focused on understanding whether faculty experienced issues such as delivering course material, engaging with students, and communicating with clients. Content-related issues focused on specific challenges related to the campaigns projects such as conducting research, creating tactics, and delivering presentations. Finally, the switch to online courses may have influenced group dynamics, so items were designed to explore issues such as group-based communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and social loafing.

Despite the emphasis on challenges, faculty may have had positive outcomes and identified strategies they would continue using in the future. As such, items were designed to explore positive changes related to course delivery styles, use of technology, and opportunities to connect with clients.

Participant Demographics and Experiences

Participants ranged from 31 to 73 years old (M = 47.85, SD = 10.96), and were primarily female (n = 35, 55.6%) and white (n = 42, 66.7%). Most participants were assistant or associate professors (n = 31, 49.2%), and taught at public universities (n = 34, 54%) with 30,000 students or less (n = 37, 75.5%). Additionally, participants primarily identified themselves as teaching at institutions with a balanced emphasis on research and teaching (n = 27, 42.9%). Table 1 provides a full picture of participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Variable	Category	*n*	Percent
Gender	Female	35	55.6%
	Male	12	19.0%
	Prefer not to Identify	3	4.8%
Race	Asian or Pacific Islander	3	4.8%
	Black or African American	0	0.0%
	Hispanic or Latino	2	3.2%
	White	42	66.7%
	Prefer not to Identify	3	4.6%
Academic Rank	Lecturer or Instructor	9	14.3%
	Assistant Professor	21	33.3%
	Associate Professor	10	15.9%
	Full Professor	7	11.1%
	Other	2	3.2%
	Prefer not to Identify	1	1.6%
Institution Type	Private	16	25.4%
	Public	34	54.0%
Number of Students Enrolled	0-5,000	9	14.3%
	5,001-10,000	6	9.5%
	10,001-15,000	8	12.7%
	15,001-20,000	3	4.8%
	20,001-25,000	6	9.5%
	25,001-30,000	5	7.9%
	30,001+	12	19.0%
Institution Emphasis	Research	8	12.7%
	Teaching	15	23.8%
	Balanced	27	42.9%

Faculty were also asked how many courses they taught, particularly during Spring 2020. Respondents taught between 1-4 sections of campaigns (*M* = 1.17, *SD* = 0.53) and between 1-7 total courses (*M* = 2.76, *SD* = 1.21) during the semester. Most participants (*n* = 11, 87.3%) taught one campaigns section in spring, and generally taught 3 (*n* = 25, 39.7%) or fewer classes overall. Additionally, per semester, participants taught between 1-5 courses (*M* = 2.75, *SD* = .92) on average, with most teaching 3 courses (*n* = 28, 44.5%). Almost all participants had previously taught campaigns prior to the pandemic (*n* = 56, 88.9%), but had varying prior experience teaching classes in different formats. More than half of participants had previously taught fully online classes (*n* = 34, 54%) and hybrid classes (*n* = 32, 50.8%); fewer participants had previously taught flipped classes (*n* = 25, 39.7%).

Results

This survey was designed to understand the specific challenges instructors faced while teaching campaigns courses during a pandemic. As this study is exploratory, we begin by outlining general findings, then answer the guiding research questions.

Course Adjustments

Because faculty were required to make changes on short notice, there was interest in understanding how much lead time instructors had to make the shift online. Table 2 shows how much advance notice faculty had to prepare for online delivery, how much time they had to prepare, and how much time students had to prepare. Although the number of days advance notice they received from their universities varied, most participants (*n* = 39, 61.9%) and their students (*n* = 41, 65.1%) had 7 or more days to prepare for online delivery. This may be attributed to the timing of university closings, which often coincided with spring breaks. As course adjustments had to be made quickly, it seemed valuable to understand how faculty sought advice about online course formats.

Participants somewhat agreed that they sought advice from colleagues (M = 5.21, SD = 1.72) and their department (M = 4.78, SD = 1.76) and were less likely to work with on-campus faculty development groups (M = 3.54, SD = 2.18) or get feedback from students (M = 3.29, SD = 2.18). Ultimately, faculty used a blend of asynchronous and synchronous delivery (n = 45, 71.4%) for their campaigns courses.

Table 2

Time to Convert

	Advance notice university gave to provide online delivery	Time faculty had to prepare for online delivery	Time students had to prepare for online delivery
0-2 days	n = 4, 6.3%	n = 5, 7.9%	n = 2, 3.2%
3-4 days	n = 15, 23.8%	n = 9, 14.3%	n = 13, 20.6%
5-6 days	n = 9, 14.3%	n = 10, 15.9%	n = 7, 11.1%
7-8 days	n = 17, 27%	n = 17, 27%	n = 19. 30.2%
9+ days	n = 18, 28.6%	n = 22, 34.9%	n = 22, 34.9%

Correlation analysis was used to explore the relationship between course-preparation experiences. Notably, a weak but significant relationship showed that faculty who had no choice about which format to use were less likely to survey students (p < .001, r = -.446) or seek advice from colleagues (p = .007, r = -.336) about course formats. This suggests that when faculty had a choice regarding how to deliver their courses, they were more likely to seek feedback and advice; when they did not have course delivery options, they simply moved forward as best as they could considering the circumstances.

Open-ended results showed that instructors relied on multiple platforms and tools to deliver course content. Most participants used a combination of their university learning management system (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, Sakai), third-party video-conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Classroom, GotoMeeting, WebEx), and additional tools (e.g., GroupMe, Google Drive, Kaptura, Keynote, Panopto, Slack, social media groups, VoiceThread) to deliver course content, manage group work, and communicate with clients.

RQ1: Specific Challenges Faced by Professors

As the pandemic created the need to adapt quickly, it was important to understand what challenges professors faced when converting their courses online. The survey explored two areas of potential challenges faced by professors: 1. The need to change specific class components, and 2. Challenges faced delivering courses.

Changing Class Components. Course components were split into two areas of interest including final project components and specific course content that may have been adjusted to accommodate student learning. Table 3 highlights which course components and project components were changed, and which were most challenging to adjust. Results suggest that in addition to changing student presentations (n = 42, 66.7%), instructors primarily changed assignments (n = 34, 54%), project components (n = 30, 47.6%) and lectures (n = 25, 39.7%).
These were also considered the most challenging course components to adjust. Additionally, there was interest in understanding which project components were modified. Results suggest that practice and client presentations (each n = 34, 54%) and tactics (n = 29, 46%) were the most frequently changed project components. These were also considered the project components that were most challenging to adjust.
Notably, the timing of the pandemic—approximately midway through the semester—meant that many students had collected data for their clients or were able to collect at least some data remotely. Additionally, as planning and evaluation can be based on secondary research, this may account for there being fewer issues with these phases.

Table 3

Adjusted Course Components

		Components Removed or Changed	Components Most Challenging to Adjust or Adapt
Course Components	Assignments	*n* = 34, 54%	*n* = 22, 34.9%
	Lectures	*n* = 25, 39.7%	*n* = 26, 41.3%
	Exams/Quizzes	*n* = 17, 27%	*n* = 9, 14.3%
	Project Components	*n* = 30, 47.6%	*n* = 32, 50.8%
	Student Presentations	*n* = 42, 66.7%	*n* = 37, 58.7%
	Other	*n* = 8, 12.7%	*n* = 6, 9.5%
Project Components	Data Collection	*n* = 15, 23.8%	*n* = 16, 25.4%
	Planning Phase	*n* = 5, 7.9%	*n* = 7, 11.1%
	Producing Tactics	*n* = 29, 46%	*n* = 25, 39.7%
	Evaluation Strategy	*n* = 15, 23.8%	*n* = 14, 22.2%
	Practice Presentations	*n* = 34, 54%%	*n* = 24, 38.1%
	Client Presentations	*n* = 34, 54%%	*n* = 25, 39.7%
	Other	*n* = 4, 6.3%	*n* = 4, 6.3%

*Project Component data is replicated in the second study described in the method.

Course Challenges. Items were developed to understand specific challenges instructors faced in their courses. Results suggest that instructors had fewer challenges when it came to finding time to meet student groups (*M* = 2.94, *SD* = 2.08) and had the most difficulty engaging individual students (*M* = 5.05, *SD* = 1.99). In general, however, faculty neither agreed nor disagreed that they experienced challenges. Even so, the relatively large standard deviations on these items are noteworthy, as they suggest that instructors had widely varying experiences in their classes. To that end, reliability analysis (α = .852) led to the development of an 8-item course challenges scale (*M* = 3.95, *SD* = 1.39). Table 4 highlights challenges faced in the course.

Table 4

Challenges in the Course

	n	*M*	*SD*
Delivering course material.	54	3.85	1.89
Conveying project expectations.	55	3.98	1.99
Engaging individual students.	55	5.05	1.99
Engaging specific student groups.	54	4.35	2.09
Finding time to meet student groups.	54	2.94	2.08
Communicating with client.	53	3.30	1.74
Student professionalism.	54	3.91	1.96
Student communication with clients.	53	3.92	1.82

*This table is replicated in the second study described in the method.

Next, items were designed to explore specific content-related issues instructors faced, particularly regarding final client projects. Results suggest mixed perceptions existed regarding the client projects, as most respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the presented scenarios. Aligning with additional results, instructors had the most issues preparing for presentations (*M* = 4.87, *SD* = 1.60). But again, relatively high standard deviations suggest varying experiences across the sample. To build on these findings, reliability analysis (α = .825) led to the development of a 7-item content issues scale (*M* = 3.98, *SD* = 1.34). Table 5 shows content-related issues instructors faced in their courses.

Table 5

Content-Related Issues

	n	*M*	*SD*
Conducting research.	53	3.40	2.15
Establishing goals and objectives.	53	3.04	1.91
Creating tactics.	53	4.21	2.13
Developing evaluative criteria.	53	3.87	1.96
Designing planbooks.	53	4.04	1.83
Designing presentations.	53	4.47	1.69
Preparing for presentations.	53	4.87	1.59

Correlation analysis suggests a relationship between course challenges and content issues. Specifically, instructors who faced course challenges were significantly more likely to experience content issues ($p < .001$, $r = .748$).

Additionally, exploratory one-way ANOVA was used to explore whether the amount of preparation time faculty had impacted course challenges ($p = .292$) or content issues ($p = .321$), but there was not a significant relationship between these variables.

Of course, challenges extended beyond the basic execution of the course and client projects. Although open-ended responses generally confirmed the quantitative results, they also highlighted multifaceted challenges participants faced converting their courses online. For example, multiple participants reported a sense of dejection among students whose work was no longer usable. Many reported that students and clients alike were "disappointed that they were not able to get F2F feedback from the clients," while others acknowledged that students experienced significant outside stressors impacting their ability to complete course components as originally intended. For example, significant technical issues related to not having WiFi, hardware, or software needed to complete specific tasks were routinely reported, leading to course and content changes. Ultimately, student engagement emerged as the most prominent issue for faculty who lamented missed opportunities to read body language, walk between and talk with groups, and create connections with clients. Mental health and stress-related issues were routinely acknowledged as impacting student engagement. The primary solution was to cancel team presentations, modify assignment expectations, and modify scheduling expectations.

Despite these challenges, some faculty (n = 6) reported having few issues converting their classes online. One participant suggested "their skills from all of the PR training made this pretty easy… it was frustrating, but we got through it." Another suggested the switch to online was easy, but the challenges were primarily student-centered (such as health and technology needs). The few faculty who reported no challenges emphasized that classes continued to meet online, data collection had already been completed, lectures were recorded, and students were notified of the online conversion in advance. One participant even reported that they "took their client presentation events online" and tapped into a national audience, attracting 115-170+ practitioners.

RQ2: Specific Student Group Challenges

As PR campaigns courses often require significant groupwork, items were designed to explore the degree to which instructors experienced group-based issues. Results suggest that instructors somewhat agreed that group-based issues existed, particularly in regard to collaboration (M = 4.87, SD = 1.93), group-based communication (M = 4.87, SD = 1.79), problem-solving (M = 4.89, SD = 1.72), and social loafing (M = 5.02, SD = 1.79). To strengthen analysis of results, reliability analysis (α = .943) led to the development of a 9-item group dynamics scale (M = 4.43, SD = 1.55). Table 6 highlights group-based issues faced by instructors.

Table 6

Group-Based Issues

	n	*M*	*SD*
Group-based communication.	52	4.87	1.79
General problem-solving.	53	4.89	1.72
In-group collaboration.	53	4.87	1.93
Compromising on campaign direction.	52	4.25	2.03
Developing a cohesive strategy.	53	4.38	1.83
Conflict resolution.	53	4.19	1.97
Understanding project direction and goals.	53	3.66	1.92
Agreeing on project direction and goals.	53	3.72	1.88
Rise in "social loafing."	52	5.02	1.79

Correlation analysis suggests a relationship between course challenges, content issues, and group dynamics. Instructors who faced student group issues were significantly more likely to experience course challenges ($p < .001$, $r = .762$) and somewhat more likely to experience content issues ($p < .001$, $r = .658$).

Qualitative results suggest that group-related issues often stemmed from a lack of engagement and outside influences related to the pandemic. As group work shifted online, the dynamic of faculty supporting groups individually changed as "the instructor at the table was not able to happen in the same way." Accountability among group members was a noted issue, as was the ability to "keep students on track." Students also faced issues regarding lack of resources and technology at home or new, unpredictable scheduling conflicts that prevented them from routinely meeting with their teams and faculty members. Participants also noted that the shift online meant "underperforming teams" and individual students could "hide," or that it was harder to "check in with teams and make sure they were working together well and finishing project elements." Overall, engagement was the key indicator of group successes or challenges.

RQ3: Adjusting Client Relationships

As many PR campaigns classes focus on experiential learning, part of the challenge of moving online involved managing and adjusting client-related work. Participants in the study served between 0 and 10 clients (*M* = 2.02, *SD* = 1.73) in Spring 2020. Most classes served 1 client (*n* = 27, 42.9%), or 3 clients (*n* = 9, 14.3%). Generally, participants (*n* = 58) found that client relationships remained relatively stable (see Table 7). However, participants only somewhat agreed that client(s) maintained the same level of engagement with their classes (*M* = 4.79, *SD* = 1.99) and neither agreed nor disagreed that client(s) had to adjust their involvement with the class because of the pandemic (*M* = 4.08, SD = 2.11).

Table 7

Client Relationships

	M	*SD*
I was able to continue my client relationships.	5.61	1.57
I communicated with my client(s) about the switch to online.	5.98	1.62
My client(s) was interested in continuing their relationship with my class	5.81	1.53
My client(s) maintained the same level of engagement with the class.	4.79	1.99
My client(s) had to back out of their partnership with my class.	1.83	1.50
My client(s) had to adjust their involvement with my class because their business was impacted by the pandemic.	4.08	2.11

Overall, participants kept lines of communication open with their clients. Participants generally agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to continue their client relationships (*n* = 40, 63.5%), and *n* = 44 participants (71.5%) agreed or strongly agreed they communicated with their clients about the move online. Although clients were interested in continuing their class relationships ($M = 5.81$, $SD = 1.53$), there was less consistency in the degree of engagement maintained with those classes. For example, 34% ($n = 22$) of participants said they strongly disagreed to neither agreed nor disagreed that clients maintained the same level of engagement. Even so, clients did not completely back out of their partnerships. Only $n = 3$ (4.8%) participants agreed or strongly agreed that clients had to back out of their classes; rather, clients seemingly adjusted their involvement because of the pandemic. Overall, $n = 31$ (49.2%) participants at least somewhat agreed that their clients adjusted their involvement. This suggests that while changes were made to the client relationships, the clients still wanted to continue their partnerships.

To further explore the impact of client relationship experiences, reliability analysis ($\alpha = .817$) led to the development of a 5-item client relationships scale ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 1.24$). Initial reliability analysis suggested the need to reverse-code items exploring whether clients had to back out of their partnerships and whether clients had to adjust their class involvement because they were impacted by the pandemic. The latter item was removed to strengthen Cronbach's α from .774 to $\alpha = .817$. Building on RQ1, a weak but significant relationship existed between general course challenges and client relationships. Specifically, the more clients remained involved in the project, the less instructors faced course challenges ($p = .024$, $r = -.307$) and content issues ($p = .002$, $r = -.317$). Although these relationships are relatively weak, they still suggest that degrees of client involvement may have informed issues faced by participants.

Open-ended results support this finding. In addition to considering the tools used to communicate with clients, participants also reflected on what they communicated and the nature of communication. Qualitative results suggested that the primary point of concern involved updating clients on project-based changes. For example, circumstances required one participant "to shift to a social media campaign since social distancing would not allow for face-to-face tactics." Another participant found their campaign no longer plausible because target audiences could not be reached in person, so the partners "mutually ended" the client-agency relationship. Generally, however, most participants reported that they simply informed clients of minor changes, such as the need to move presentations online.

Overall, most client relationships continued, but few appeared to continue without adjustments. As expected, clients faced their own challenges as they modified their business practices and needs; they had to close their businesses, were laid off or furloughed, or in general "were struggling with the reality of COVID-19 and running their organizations." In some cases, clients did not have video-conferencing tools or other software, became geographically dispersed from colleagues, or were balancing personal issues such as childcare. Some clients were impacted by shifting workloads and making their own rapid changes. This sometimes resulted in lags in responsiveness, but also led clients to "sometimes [give] us the autonomy to make decisions without review or collaboration." The most noted change in client engagement, however, were changes to the final presentation. Multiple participants reported either canceling presentations altogether, providing recorded presentations, or switching presentations online. In many cases, this removed an opportunity for client evaluation and feedback, but ultimately did not significantly impact the overall client relationship.

RQ4: Positive Curricular Changes

Although there may be a tendency to focus on the negatives of the pandemic, this study sought to explore potentially positive outcomes. Specifically, by being forced to move classes online, many instructors may have discovered strategies or tools that could be adopted in future iterations of campaigns classes.

Overall, participants neither agreed nor disagreed with moving presentations online (*M* = 4.30, *SD* = 1.95) or the idea of changing the overall course format. However, participants somewhat agreed that they would consider having more online course meetings (*M* = 5.26, *SD* = 1.54), would deliver various course content online (see Table 8), and would teach students how to conduct group work remotely (*M* = 5.6, *SD* = 1.13). Additionally, they agreed that they would connect with teams online (*M* = 5.86, *SD* = 1.32). This suggests that while there are still barriers to putting campaigns courses online, the pandemic revealed opportunities to better facilitate course delivery online. Table 8 highlights these changes.

Table 8

Positive Outcomes for Future Use

	n	*M*	*SD*
Have more online course meetings.	50	5.26	1.54
Teach students how to conduct group work remotely.	50	5.60	1.13
Deliver lecture-based material online.	50	5.44	1.36
Deliver project expectation instructions online.	50	5.38	1.32
Flip my class.	49	4.35	1.69
Teach my class as a hybrid.	49	4.82	2.02
Connect with teams online.	49	5.86	1.32
Connect with client online.	49	5.65	1.35
Conduct client research fully online.	49	4.27	1.71
Move general student presentations online.	50	4.40	1.92
Move client presentations online.	50	4.30	1.95

To further explore the impact of positive changes, reliability analysis ($\alpha = .792$) led to the development of an 11-item positive outcomes scale (*M* = 5.02, *SD* = 0.90). The relationship between client relationships and positive outcomes was explored, but regression analysis suggests that quality of client relationships did not influence beliefs about positive outcomes related to the switch to online learning, $F(1, 47) = 3.185$, *p*

= .081, R^2 = .044. This builds on previous results suggesting that while the quality of client relationships may have influenced specific course-related issues, the overall positive benefits of moving online were more strongly related to the course itself, its participants, and accessibility to technologies. This is supported in the open-ended findings.

First, participants reported additional benefits to teaching online such as increased access to course materials that students could "access anytime, anywhere." Some student groups adapted well to online learning, getting better about time- and group-management and participating in more one-on-one meetings with faculty. One participant started a private Facebook group that provided opportunities to ask questions and host Facebook live sessions. In general, participants experiencing positive outcomes felt going online provided "real-world skill when it comes to online calls" and remote working. Additionally, the lack of commute time provided more time to complete tasks such as course preparation and grading.

Because of these outcomes, at least some participants identified strategies they might change based on their experience teaching campaigns online. Faculty felt there were more opportunities to organize and articulate campaign components, offer flipped-class solutions to give students more time to work in class, and give students autonomy to work on their own time. By having content online, participants see opportunities to provide more resources and clearer descriptions of course expectations that students can review on their own time. Multiple participants also planned to embrace opportunities to spend more time guiding students rather than delivering content—a popular solution appears to be through the implementation of hybrid or flipped models. One participant suggested, "I enjoyed the flipped model with lectures online and using class time – either in person or via video conferencing – to be a guide on the side." Finally, numerous participants plan to embrace opportunities to reduce in-class time. By seeing that students worked well independently, multiple participants felt moving components online provides an opportunity to practice remote work strategies and move past "antiquated needs to ALWAYS meet in person." Solutions included giving "groups more opportunities to work independently outside of class with clear expectations for checking in."

Despite these optimistic approaches to the benefits of and potential strategies for teaching online, multiple participants simply saw no positive outcomes from the switch online. When prompted to reflect on benefits experienced when moving online, n = 8 participants indicated there were no "notable benefits" and that they simply "prefer not to teach the Campaigns class online." Faculty in this position recognized strategies they can use to create engagement and teach campaigns online, but still felt this was not something they wanted to embrace unless forced to. Ultimately, this suggests that while tools and resources may be available to make positive course changes, there are still outside factors that influence the degree to which faculty want to adopt these changes moving forward.

Discussion

This exploratory study aimed to examine how PR professors adapted to teaching campaigns courses online at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020. Campaigns courses are routinely taught in public relations programs (Auger & Cho, 2016), and often include opportunities for students to produce full or proposed campaigns for real clients (Aldoory & Wrigley, 2000). Results of this study demonstrated that the emphasis on group work and experiential learning coupled with the rapid switch to online course delivery created distinct challenges for teaching the PR campaigns course compared to those teaching other types of courses. Faculty teaching PR campaigns experienced consistent challenges related to the switch to online learning, but these challenges were not directly related to student groups or client relationship issues as much as they reflected the inability to ensure that students had the technological resources needed to successfully complete their courses. Arguably, student- and client-related issues stemmed from a lack of or inconsistent access to resources among all parties involved. And while the sudden switch to online learning revealed potential opportunities to evolve the structure of future campaigns classes, the perceived potential success of those efforts rests on the ability for faculty to guarantee equal access to tools and resources needed to complete large-scale client projects.

Access to Resources and the Technological Gap

Overall, analysis of results indicates that the degrees of success experienced converting campaigns courses online were a direct result of whether students had access to resources and technology. For example, when evaluating the final campaign components, client presentations and campaign tactics were most frequently changed or eliminated altogether. A deeper analysis of the data suggests that changes were not made because of an inability to deliver content online but because circumstances required such adaptations. For example, students who had not collected data prior to the shift online were often left with limited options for reaching target audiences. This made it more difficult to produce campaign tactics and materials based on primary data.

Further, qualitative results suggest the most reported challenge to course delivery involved reaching students who had inconsistent internet access or lacked the hardware and software necessary to produce campaign components. Digital access has been widely reported as a significant predictor of student success at all educational levels, particularly during the pandemic (Sparks, 2020). Such divides appear to have impacted campaigns instructors; Although instructors had less difficulty meeting with groups, they had significant difficulty engaging individuals. Arguably, individual students without consistent internet access or using mobile devices such as phones and tablets were simply unable to participate fully, thus increasing a sense of disengagement. This even extended to clients, as those who lacked resources were most likely to reduce their involvement in student projects. And the more that faculty experienced diminishing engagement from students and clients, the more they faced course challenges and content issues.

The notion that these issues are resource-driven can, in part, be attributed to the findings that faculty seemed undeterred by issues related to short turnover time, the ability to convert course content, and the ability to modify project expectations. Moreover, faculty expressed few problems with delivering materials, conveying course expectations, meeting with students, and maintaining client relationships. So, despite the prevailing notion that converting courses online requires significant time and effort (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010), and even though most faculty had between 3-8 days to convert their courses, they seemed to be nimble in their approaches. Often seeking advice from colleagues, they clearly used readily available and known tools, and relied on multiple, diverse platforms to deliver content.

Ultimately, the time faculty had to prepare their courses did not influence challenges they faced. However, it seems glib to suggest that no amount of technological know-how and confidence as an instructor can overcome the issues that emerge when students do not have consistent access to the tools being employed to meet best practices for online teaching. This suggests that emergent issues had little to do with instructor ability and more to do with resource and technology access issues.

Moving Forward

In response to the pandemic, Brownlee (2020) identified three opportunities to "[ensure] your institution is best positioned to support its students in the COVID-era of higher education" (para. 2). This included bridging the gaps on digital divide, experiential learning, and campus community. Arguably, PR campaigns courses are uniquely positioned to bridge these specific gaps, and findings suggest that campaigns instructors see this opportunity. Despite the outlined challenges, technology and pedagogical evolution appear to be at the heart of perceived opportunities to learn from and adapt to pandemic-driven teaching experiences. Many instructors felt that being forced online highlighted opportunities to streamline campaigns courses by reducing the number of in-person meetings and delivering lecture-based content in a flipped modality. As the industry was already shifting toward virtual workspaces prior to the pandemic, faculty acknowledged the shift online provided an opportunity to give students real-world virtual teamwork experiences.

Additionally, results suggest opportunities to strengthen learner-to-learner, learner-to-instructor, and learner-to-content opportunities. As faculty appeared to have an easier time communicating with groups, but had more difficulty engaging individual students, the use of groups may provide an opportunity for faculty to reach individual students. Learner-to-learner engagement can be enhanced through guided icebreaker or team-building activities (Martin & Bolliger, 2018), which could lead to increased trust and engagement among group members. This could create an additional line of communication with individual students who may be more difficult to reach. Next, PR faculty can increase learner-to-instructor and learner-to-content opportunities by maintaining a consistent mix of synchronous and asynchronous communication with students about course and assignment expectations. Combining synchronous weekly meetings with regular announcements can foster a collaborative environment while simultaneously providing students the autonomy to work asynchronously. This approach also mimics the PR agency experience, wherein practitioners often work in teams but use meetings to track progress on projects and identify which tasks will be completed independently.

Moreover, the shift to online learning provides opportunities to strengthen student-client relationships. As a means of engagement, faculty may seek on-campus clients that resonate with students, helping build a sense of personal interest in the campaign projects. Additionally, moving the traditional client discovery meeting online can ensure that the usual interactions between students and clients are maintained. By meeting virtually, it also may be possible for clients to meet more frequently with classes, such as during key points of the project. If that type of increased interaction is unmanageable for the client, it could be supplemented by inviting other professionals to attend important student presentations as an opportunity to gain outside feedback on the work being produced.

Finally, for faculty, by connecting with teams and clients online, there appear to be opportunities to emphasize giving students the autonomy to work independently as faculty act as guides-on-the-side and reclaim time needed for course preparation and grading. For some instructors, the pandemic led to a paradigm shift that questions the need for in-person engagement when so much of what happens in practice is virtual. Still, not everyone was as optimistic about the future of online campaigns courses. While some acknowledged they could teach this way but simply preferred not to, others felt strongly that campaigns courses require more consistent engagement between students and instructors. Essentially, the outside influencing factors—such as access to resources and lack of technology—seemed like hurdles too big to overcome.

In short, faculty who had more positive experiences seemingly had the least number of issues with student resource and technology access. And, while there is truth to the arguments that in practice PR professionals should be able to conduct business remotely and in quickly morphing situations, one must consider that students taking these classes are not yet professionals, nor do higher education institutions readily provide the tools necessary to complete their work remotely, as might be the case in professional settings.

This suggests that, as we consider how campaigns classes will evolve, we must also consider how to create equitable circumstances through which our students can learn. The sudden shift online means that higher education institutions have had to reimagine their technology infrastructures, and faculty and students alike have had to contend with digital divides and changing perceptions about the quality of online learning opportunities (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2020). Without the technology-based tools necessary to complete projects of the scale generally expected in campaigns courses, it may remain difficult to encourage buy-in from the students and faculty participating in these courses as they continue to face stressors that limit the potential of these courses.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A primary limitation of this study is the sample size and its representativeness. A mix of convenience and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants, yielding a non-representative and potentially homogenous group of participants. Although there was balanced representation regarding gender, academic rank, and institutional factors, participants lacked racial diversity. Future studies should consider a more robust sampling strategy that includes the experiences of faculty at more diverse institutions.

Further, future studies should consider whether students' socioeconomic factors and shared mental health experiences influence the experiences faculty have converting their campaigns courses online. Early evidence suggests that parent education may be a stronger indicator of potential student success, as those with higher levels of education were more likely to remain employed, have access to home computers and internet, and have access to schools with stronger levels of student support (Sparks, 2020). More troubling, however, is the emergent mental health impacts on both students and faculty. Ongoing research suggests that the pandemic arrived during "a mental health crisis that had been unraveling on college campuses for years" (Lumpkin, 2021, para. 4). And while students experienced decreased well-being related to stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Anderson, 2020), so too did faculty. Within the first year of the pandemic, reports continued to emerge regarding faculty burnout (McMurtrie, 2020) and chronic stress (Flaherty, 2020). In a widely shared research brief by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2021), more than a third of respondents indicated they had considered changing careers or retiring. Undoubtedly, the effects of these experiences are likely to continue playing a role in the perceived success of delivering classes—particularly intensive capstone courses such as PR campaigns—in online or multi-modality formats.

Other limitations of the study include its exploratory nature and timing, although both can be considered starting points for future research examining faculty experiences teaching mixed-modality campaigns courses. Although survey items were evaluated in the context of best practices, the changing nature of the pandemic meant that many factors were not captured quantitatively. Additionally, this study was specifically designed to capture faculty experiences at the start of the pandemic. As many universities have switched to hybrid and HyFlex teaching models, and as the pandemic continues to extend beyond initial expectations, there exist opportunities to understand whether faculty experiences have evolved.

Finally, future studies may examine specific technology access issues, the degree to which faculty become more comfortable teaching online, and whether students become more accustomed to working remotely. They may also explore whether opportunities to strengthen classes were implemented and the results of those changes. For example, the pandemic circumstances may have led to opportunities to close the technology gaps experienced during the initial stages of the pandemic.

In short, like the practitioners they are grooming, PR faculty are nimble and will continue to pivot to meet student needs and produce quality campaigns experiences.

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Special Issue: The Unprecedented Upheaval of Public Relations Education

The Pandemic Pivot: How Teachable Moments in a Service-Learning Course Provided an Opportunity for Student Growth

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ABSTRACT

Research shows students gain considerable experience working with peers and interacting with clients in the real-world settings that service-learning classes provide. But, what happens when well-planned and well-structured service-learning opportunities are interrupted by social distancing, nonprofit closures, and quarantines? Although upfront planning and structure are essential for effective service-learning experiences, all players – students, clients, and instructors – must prepare for the unexpected. This article assesses undergraduate student reflection essays to ascertain their perceptions of the spring 2020 mid-semester shift to online learning for a public relations service-learning course. These results help identify strategies instructors may employ when university teaching requires significant online activity.

Keywords: service learning, experiential learning, reflection

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The most-recent Commission on Public Relations Education report (CPRE, 2018) continued the calls from the 1999 and 2006 reports for experiential learning, based in part on research showing potential employers identified the importance of hiring experienced practitioners. The report concluded that "supervised work experience or internship" is one of five core requirements "essential to an undergraduate program in public relations" (p. 60).

While CPRE identified internships as the most-crucial experiential learning opportunities, the report also acknowledges service-learning courses are beneficial for undergraduates "to gain career-related experience and establish professional contacts" (CPRE, 2018, p. 63). Researchers have found that students gain considerable experience working with peers and interacting with clients in the real-world settings that service-learning classes, such as public relations writing and campaigns, can provide (Cox, 2013; Farmer et al., 2016; Gleason & Violette, 2012; Harrison & Bak, 2017; Witmer et al., 2008).

While there is considerable focus on structure and planning service-learning initiatives (e.g., Gleason & Violette, 2012; Lundy, 2008; McCorkindale et al., 2018), Harrison and Bak (2017) also acknowledge the necessity of "having a back-up plan" (p. 84) when assumptions such as easy and ongoing access to client representatives don't play out as expected. Contingency planning may come into play because of day-to-day time management challenges. Nonprofit personnel often have to multitask, and some of these clients "simply ha[ve] too many other obligations to make us [service learning class] high on their priority list, resulting in communication breakdowns between the client and the team" (McCorkindale, et al., 2018, p. 85).

Such is the situation in the COVID-19 era. What happens when well-planned and well-structured service-learning opportunities are interrupted by social distancing, business closures, and quarantines?

The purpose of this research is two-fold: (1) to assess undergraduate students' perceptions of the mid-semester shift to online teaching and learning for a service-learning course in public relations writing, and (2) to help instructors teaching this service-learning course plan for subsequent semesters that may require significant online activity. One way to ascertain the service-learning effectiveness is to review reflection essays written by students and posted on their publicly accessible web portfolios as part of their final project.

Background

Public Relations Writing is an applied writing skills laboratory and service-learning course. Students create major communication tools of the public relations trade for multiple platforms, including news releases for print and broadcast, content for digital media, feature pitches, speeches, fact sheets, media advisories, public service announcements, direct mail campaigns, and more.

This course emphasizes that students learn professional writing skills best by doing, particularly through experiential, hands-on work in partnership with community nonprofit organizations. In addition to applying public relations strategies and proper techniques to written content, they also create personal online portfolios that showcase deliverables they develop for their nonprofit community partners.

Although the spring 2020 semester started off like any other, it quickly presented significant, unexpected challenges for faculty, students, and their community partners. The COVID-19 global pandemic resulted in sudden, stay-at-home orders by state and city governments; these initial announcements coincided with the university's spring break. Everyone, including faculty, students, and community partners, had no choice but to move instruction and service-learning activities online. The closures took place at a critical point in the course, when the momentum of student learning and community engagement typically peaks.

The responses of community partners to these challenges varied widely. Most organizations did their best to survey and address the situation, successfully staying engaged with their student teams and service-learning projects through the end of the semester. In other instances, students were not able to reach their organization supervisor, which created a predicament for those trying to meet course objectives.

Literature Review

Service learning has a good track record as an effective strategy for public relations courses, including writing and campaigns (Cox, 2013; Daugherty, 2003; Farmer et al., 2016; Gleason & Violette, 2012; Harrison & Bak, 2017; Lundy, 2008; Werder & Strand, 2011). These classes provide a win-win: nonprofit organizations gain extra expertise to meet their public relations goals in serving their stakeholders, and students expand their abilities and portfolios through pre-professional, hands-on activities (Harrison & Bak, 2017). In addition to this real-world experience, students are more likely to connect classroom concepts to their on-the-job experiences, and apply critical-thinking and problem-solving proficiencies to develop professional independence and collaborative skills (Daugherty, 2003; Gilchrist, 2007; Wigert, 2011). They also may develop "a greater sense of cross-cultural understanding" and a stronger commitment to civic responsibility and community service ("Universities and colleges," n.d.). Wigert (2011) determined that students "who contributed more hours to their service-learning placement, and wrote more in-depth reflections on their experiences, gained more from the service-learning requirement" (p. 96).

A crucial component of service learning is having students reflect formally on their experiences, which allows them to connect the relevance of their textbook learning with their on-the-job activities (Lahman, 2012; Wigert, 2011). As Dubinsky (2006) explains, "Students need opportunities to respond to their service intellectually and emotionally; to discuss problems and questions; and to come to understand if and, if so, how their service activities are helping them learn and apply the course goals" (p. 307). Such a formalized process can solidify and heighten learning now (Wigert, 2011), while also preparing students to make better decisions down the road. Introspection also shows how students may develop empathy toward those facing social problems and see the value of their continued community service (Gilchrist, 2007; Lundy, 2008; Rogers, 2001). These insights can help instructors understand their students' experiences (Mahin & Kruggel, 2006) and then incorporate those viewpoints into their subsequent lessons.

There are a number of ways students can reflect, including journaling, end-of-semester papers, and informal, in-class conversations (Lake, 2008; Lundy, 2008; Wigert, 2011). Written reflections, stress Cone and Harris (1996), can help students perfect their ability to think and write critically (see also Lundy, 2008). Lake recommends providing students with clear prompts to guide their responses. These prompts may ask students how their experiences connect to the course material, how they feel about their client's situation, what recommendations they would make to their client, and, when applicable, how the team dynamic progressed (Lundy, 2008). Lahman (2012) added the question, "Of all the contributions you made, which one(s) do you value the most?" (p. 2).

These foundations for service learning and reflections address expectations through the course of a regular semester. But, it is also important to ask how students perceive their service-learning experiences when a crisis – the COVID-19 pandemic –changes how they take classes, interact with their clients, and meet course objectives.

Based on this literature and course background, the following research questions were posed:

RQ 1: How did undergraduate students in public relations classes perceive their service-learning experiences after the shift to online teaching and learning?

RQ 2: How do their experiences inform service-learning course planning when it requires significant online activity?

Method

A total of 44 reflection essays publicly accessible from students' portfolio websites were analyzed qualitatively. Each essay is 1-2 pages in length, single-spaced, and addresses four prompts (aligning with Lake's (2008) recommendations) that helped students articulate their service-learning experiences in general and in the context of the unprecedented shift to online learning:

- How did this experience contribute to your education and preparation for the real world?
- What was the most-valuable part of your service-learning experience? Most challenging? Least-valuable?
- What recommendations would you make to the client regarding its public relations efforts?
- What recommendations would you make regarding continuing to work with this particular client as a future community partner?

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze 44 essays that reflected students' perceptions of their service-learning experiences. This "inductive process of searching for concepts, ideas, themes, and categories … help[s] the researcher to organize and interpret data" (Benaquisto, 2008, p. 86) in ways that show how student experiences have similarities and differences.

The process began with open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which involved reading and re-reading the reflection essays to identify "categories of meaning" (Court et al., 2018, p. 61), guided by the first research question. In the axial coding step, the categories were revised, refined, and merged; the repetitive process helped show relationships among categories and explain the students' experiences. In vivo coding

– using the students' words and phrases – was employed to ensure the students' meaning was captured. Finally, in selective coding, category linkages were identified, themes were solidified, and the researchers revisited the literature to synthesize the results (Benaquisto, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Julien, 2008).

Results

The themes emerging from the analysis reflected both positive and negative reactions the students had regarding the COVID-19 shift to online-only class and client interaction. Primarily, positive comments focused on learning how to adapt when plans go awry, optimism, seeing the significance of effective communication, and their ability to make a difference in their community. Negative comments reflected students' frustrations with how the stay-at-home orders disrupted their routines and affected their ability to meet course requirements, paired with a feeling that they were in their client's way. The analysis begins with the two themes reflecting students' perceptions of the downsides of their experience.

"My Real-World Learning Opportunity Was Taken Away from Me"

Students definitely felt a loss when shifting from in-person and onsite classes to distance learning. They shared concerns that COVID-19 "definitely made it more difficult for me to learn" because "the whole dynamic of the course changed" and "we lost our direction." They found it challenging, "to still be as present and attentive to our clients in this chaos. … [O]nce my world and all of my classes flipped upside down, it was hard to be as helpful as I was before we moved to online classes." As a result, they also felt distanced from the nonprofit organizations they served.

One student found the changes untenable. "My real-world learning opportunity was taken away from me," they wrote, adding:

> It is crazy how unfair the world can be sometimes. Here college students are trying to learn and prepare for their future and our full

> learning experience is stripped right from our hands because of a pandemic that came out of nowhere.

Other students focused on how the changes affected their ability to complete required assignments. “I feel like I lost out a bit in developing my portfolio,” one student wrote, “as my writing materials became based purely off of what I could salvage from the cluttered organization website.” Another perceived the reduced client interaction as the antithesis of effective public relations:

> Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was never able to visit the office or foster close relationships with the organization’s staff. This inability to foster relationships within [the organization] limited my understanding of the organization as a whole and proved to be the least valuable part of my experience.

“More of a Burden than an Asset”

Most students also recognized the impact that sheltering in place had on their clients, as the nonprofits “had to shift their focus” to “address more-pressing issues.” For example, “Once measures were put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the organization also had to cancel its largest fundraising event of the year,” one student wrote. Another student explained, “[Our organization] obviously had more on its plate than it would have anticipated when it agreed to take on a team of student volunteers, and we were no longer a top priority.”

While they wanted to assist their organizations, some students expressed concern about being “more of a burden than an asset since I could not actively aid in helping or providing solutions to [our client’s] main obstacles during this time.” Another wrote:

> I began to feel like we were in her way more than anything. It was difficult to balance the feeling of wanting to help and fulfill the requirements for the class without feeling like a bother, especially during the pandemic. We tried to take the stress off of our nonprofit

> by coming up with projects to work on by ourselves. This proved to be the most vulnerable part of the experience. I felt that we were out of line and wasting her time. Most of what we suggested she shot down.

Although students shared feelings about negative experiences and perceptions, many also wrote about positive experiences and opportunities to grow professionally. They applied classroom lessons and saw value in learning to adapt in ways that allowed them to make a difference for their clients and community.

"I Had to Learn to Quickly Adapt and Shift My Plans"

Despite the disruption and uncertainty of COVID-19 and the required shift to online, many students found ways to adjust to "the new normal," and "think proactively and use strategic communications to highlight the hope in the current situation." In fact, several saw change as an opportunity for personal growth. One student wrote about the need to adjust expectations:

> [I] learn[ed] to adapt to change in times of crisis, not panic and continue to persevere in my responsibilities. Seeing an organization have to adapt to a drastic change like this and keep their publics informed is something I will likely not see again in my lifetime.

Others said they learned how to pivot when the COVID-19 crisis disrupted their routines. When "the events were cancelled and we weren't able to achieve certain PR goals … we did not give up on the client just because the work became more difficult," a student wrote. "I'm proud we persisted and it was a valuable learning experience about how to handle external crises impeding planned PR work with clients."

Motivated to be proactive, some students crafted messages and tactics their clients might employ in response to the crisis. As one student explained:

> [Our supervisor] expressed that COVID-19 was negatively affecting [the organization] and may cause them to have to shut down operations. The pandemic's influence on the organization allowed us to come up with ideas for the company, such as making a case analysis to see what other nonprofits are doing during COVID-19 and make recommendations based on that information.

Lack of client direction did not discourage some of these pre-professionals. "[S]ometimes we did not receive direct communication from our client about what services to deliver or what we should be working on," wrote one student, adding:

> At those times, I had to think like a professional, and cultivate the right tone and subject matter to give the client work that perhaps they did not know they needed. For example, when writing a news release about the coronavirus, I had to consult past communications from the organization, as well as read the affirmation and mission statement over and over to nail down the tone and the messages that the organization would want to send to its publics.

While some nonprofit supervisors went dark, others took advantage of the teachable moments. A student explained:

> The challenges led to some of the most valuable parts of working with [the client]," said a student. "I learned a real-world scenario about how to implement crisis communication. Our team talked with [our supervisor] about the balance of protecting and promoting the [organization] while remaining sensitive to the issues surrounding COVID-19.

Another student wrote, "In the real world, there will always be some level of crisis to manage, and by working with my client I was able to put into practice protecting and promoting the organization."

One supervisor kept the students abreast of the strategies required to shift gears:

> [Our supervisor] was transparent to our team about [the client's] priorities and capabilities during that time. She informed me that [the organization] not only had to stop offering many of their community programs, but that they were also suffering from staff shortages. Rather than releasing a statement about the postponement of the fundraiser, she emphasized that the focus of the organization should be to provide updates to the community about their available services as well as provide information about available online resources. Learning directly from [our supervisor] about how to adjust to a real-world crisis will definitely help me better evaluate potential difficulties I may face in future workplaces.

"Seeing the Good in Every Situation Is the Key to Success."

It is understandable that students would be discouraged that their service-learning opportunity did not progress as they had hoped. Yet, many students still were willing to "change my perspective," which, "helped me grow in ways that I believe will help me immensely in my career."

Another student explained:

> I got to experience a logistical nightmare and find ways to communicate on behalf of my client in a way that would reassure and inform the target publics. The coronavirus is impacting [sic] businesses and people all across the world, and no one had time to prepare for it, so having to completely reorganize plans and come up with a new strategy is something I might have to do one day as a PR professional.

They also saw themselves grow personally and professionally: "In the real world of public relations, nothing is ever perfect; nothing goes exactly to plan. This pandemic helped me learn to be more flexible, while also giving me insight into how organizations respond to crises and communicate with their publics in the face of adversity." The students' ability to find or create opportunities contributed to their success, as well:

> I was able to learn more and produce more work, and now have a strong example of the importance of proactive reputation-building PR when trying to advocate for my services to a non-profit client.…We were able to create and deliver some good work, if not as much as we would've liked, I hope that [the client] will use this work in the future, and I know that I will carry my experience with this type of crisis management to be more adaptive in nonprofit PR work in the future.… Above all of it, I learned the importance of turning trouble into opportunities.

The instructor, as the third participant in service learning, also played an important role in guiding students through the changes. As one student explained, "While at first this seemed like a major setback as many of the events and items my team planned to conquer were no longer feasible, [our instructor] always encouraged us to see each potential threat as an opportunity."

"I Realized Communication Is More Critical Now Than Ever."

Being in "a tough situation" meant student-client interaction "dwindled off because of unforeseen circumstances." Yet, many students "realized communication is more critical now than ever," both with their clients and the clients' stakeholders.

The students' initial concern was reaching their organization supervisors, many of whom "were busy with transitioning their practices to something more adaptable for their clients during quarantine." As one student wrote, "I learned about the importance of effective communication as well as how to professionally navigate a frustrating situation without risking the relationship with my client." Another noted, "Luckily, the staff was great about communicating over email to ensure that there were no misunderstandings throughout the semester."

That communication enabled students to modify their plans based on client needs. According to one student:

> During the transition, I had the opportunity to speak with a coordinator at [our organization] for an extensive period of time to create a game plan for the rest of the semester. After the transition, our group and client reestablished a solid communication channel and resumed work.

The result of reestablishing effective communication with supervisors "was an incredibly eye-opening experience" that allowed students to contribute their public relations expertise to support stakeholders. One student wrote:

> The deliverables I created for [our client], specifically the ones pertaining to COVID-19, are extremely important to the organization right now. This experience of COVID-19 will go down in history, and I got to create a news release and fact sheet for an organization that needs those right now. They need to communicate with their publics and I was able to do some of that communicating. That opportunity is unmatched.

Another summed up the experience this way: "I am still grateful for the learning experience and opportunity to adapt to a challenge. [The client] taught me a lot about the importance of strong leadership and consistent communication.

"Truly Make a Difference"

Students often identify that their reason for going into public relations and strategic communication is their ability to make a difference in their communities, country, and world. That theme was evident in these reflection essays, as well. "Fortunately (or unfortunately), the COVID-19 pandemic eventually gave our team a substantial problem/opportunity to work with," wrote one student. "This allowed us to create some potential PR strategies to make sure [the organization] stayed afloat during the pandemic."

Students also reflected a sense of pride in their hands-on roles in helping nonprofit clients during these difficult times. "After moving past our initial disappointment, my team shifted our outlook and dedicated our work to serving [our clients'] needs in the midst of COVID-19," one student wrote. "We were able to practice our crisis communications skills and I believe, truly make a difference." Another shared appreciation for the experience: "Watching [our organization] transform to online while continuing to support its [clients] is truly inspiring and I am so grateful that I got to be a part of that change."

Overall, the positive comments outweighed the negative ones, showing that they were able to identify the value of their experiences despite the disruption. Any focus on assignments and grades was overshadowed by a sense of optimism and pride in accomplishments for the good of the organization, their stakeholders, and the community.

Discussion

As the results show, most students rose to the occasion, maintaining optimism, a can-do attitude, and a remarkable eagerness to apply course concepts to their clients' needs in real time. Only a few students went silent for a time, but resurfaced soon after the initial upheaval as they learned to navigate their new circumstances at home and at work. Although some students ended the semester feeling pessimistic that their service-learning experiences didn't go as planned, most regained their bearings and expressed optimism, describing lessons they gleaned from their experiences, many of which reinforce the four service-learning outcomes identified by Witmer et al. (2008).

First, students related instances in which they were able to apply classroom learning to their real-world, service-learning experiences (Witmer et al., 2008). They identified examples of using their knowledge of crisis communication and relationship-building to strategize ways to help their clients as well as meet course objectives. Their real-world learning occasionally seemed harsh, particularly when their ideas were dismissed or their emails went unanswered. But, they also relayed success stories and feelings that they had contributed to their organization's ability to weather the COVID-19 storm. Second, teamwork was evident as students conversed and collaborated to develop the most-effective ways to engage their clients despite the shutdowns. Although they expressed some disappointment and frustrations in their reflection essays, they also consistently referred to "we" and "our" more than "I" and "me."

Third, not all client interactions went as students had initially planned. Some found it challenging to connect with their nonprofit's leadership, some felt as if they were an extra burden, and others applied a quarantine pivot to help their clients navigate the crisis. This finding supports Harrison and Bak's (2017) contention that contingency planning is vital for students – and practitioners – to employ. While some students relied on instructor guidance or recommendations to jumpstart their efforts, others were proactive, sometimes employing trial-and-error approaches to find what was most effective. There is a tendency to expect upper-level students to take the initiative; however, it is also important to remember the high levels of stress and uncertainty these students experienced, which may have affected the speed with which they regrouped. Fourth, the students' references to doing good for others was particularly noticeable, which aligns with Witmer et al.'s (2008) and Cox's (2013) conclusions that civic responsibility can be nurtured in service-learning. Amid stress and uncertainty, there is a human tendency to focus inward on one's own needs and feelings. Despite their angst, many students connected with their client communities that had lived experiences different from their own, which supports literature about the potential for civic engagement and social responsibility growth (Gilchrist, 2007; Lundy, 2008; Rogers, 2001). These students found their way outward to appreciate their ability to strengthen their communication skills for the betterment of nonprofit organizations.

Additionally, the reflection essays provided a medium for students to share accomplishments, make recommendations, vent, and show what they learned. There is a degree of "self-discovery" that Blomstrom and Tam (2008) discerned in their assessment of reflection essays. This finding also supports Dubinsky's (2006) contention that intellectual and emotional reflection helps students synthesize their experiences with course material, understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and help them prepare for post-graduation endeavors in public relations (see also Wigert, 2011).

Recommendations

There are three sets of players in the service-learning environment. Thus far, this research focused on two groups – the students, primarily, as well as the clients they served. The third group in this relationship is the instructors, who serve as coaches, leaders, and occasional confessors. As Harrison and Bak (2017) discussed in their article, instructors – like students – must also learn to pivot, whether realizing each semester's clients and students are different or tackling monumental changes during a pandemic quarantine. In their assessment, Harrison and Bak documented how their teaching assumptions sometimes didn't match the realities, which allowed them to do their own reflection on lessons learned and recommendations for subsequent classes. So, too, the now-infamous "pandemic pivot" pushed faculty out of their own comfort zones.

Instructor challenges

Amid the maelstrom of spring semester 2020, faculty – with their own stresses – embarked on a pedagogical journey in uncharted waters. A shift from in-class instruction to an online environment was fraught with technological trip-ups, but also opened time to refocus students on the opportunities ahead. The instructor, who occasionally added cheerleader to her repertoire, combined synchronous and asynchronous tactics to engage students in real-world discussions that moved from "What about my assignments?" to "What about the client's new communication needs?"

But the challenges didn't end when spring semester books closed. Faculty shifted their focus to an eye on how much of spring's experiential learning approaches would continue into the fall semester. Although some classes began in hybrid or mask-to-mask formats, a shift back to all-online teaching and learning soon followed. Among the practices added or reinforced for fall:

- Start building relationships with students early to establish foundations for their success. The online environment can make it difficult to participate in pre- and post-class exchanges that occur organically in face-to-face classrooms. These one-on-one interactions help the instructor gauge student abilities and challenges early and over the course of the semester.
- Consider how to "manufacture" interactions. For example, an instructor may text students during a synchronous class meeting and invite them to reply with a question or comment. In addition to finding out whether students are engaged in the day's activities, it also opens the door for the instructor to respond individually and continue the conversations started in the first online, face-to-face introductions.
- Regular encouragement can be accomplished through video or digital measures. For example, sending a weekly, detailed group message to students on Sunday afternoons can provide an overview of the coming week, reminders about assignments and deadlines, and generally encourage them and equip them for a better week. Mix it up with written documents and short videos.
- Identify ways to stimulate the natural conversations with students that occur in hallways and classrooms, such as extended office hours and other appointments.
- Encouraging team and client dialogue around relevant topics in

online forums can facilitate participation and learning while also providing ongoing opportunities for student reflection. Although most posts come from an instructor's prompts, over time, students may converse with one another. It is also important for the instructor to provide students with regular feedback to maintain the momentum.

- There's a balancing act for instructors to show compassion for the physical, emotional, and financial struggles students may face while also retaining a sense of discipline.

Also consider the type of exchanges that will benefit the client partners. Typically, instructors meet or call the nonprofit leaders individually before the semester gets underway. With the limits imposed by the pandemic, these interactions typically occur online to solidify the partnerships and undergird the whole service-learning experience for students and instructor. Once student teams are assigned, instructors are less involved in day-to-day communications, which ensures students gain first-hand experience in client relations. However, recognizing that clients may have their own set of pandemic-induced challenges, instructor check-ins may mitigate any problems before they get out of hand.

Faculty at various universities have identified opportunities for service-learning engagement. For example, Susan Haarman (2020), with Loyola University Chicago's Center for Experiential Learning, created a resource for reflecting on civic responsibilities during the pandemic. It includes reflection prompts such as:

- "When you think of the individuals you met at your placement, are there certain factors that put them more at risk to outbreaks like COVID-19? Are there certain factors that uniquely give them an advantage?" (para. 3)
- "How do you understand your obligations and responsibilities to others? Has this experience challenged or confirmed that?" (para. 8)
- "What assumptions or implications does your coursework have about

an individual's role or obligations to their community?" (para. 8)

- "Some students experienced having to be relocated unexpectedly due to larger issues outside of your control. Has this made you more aware of or thinking differently about issues of freedom of mobility?" (para. 5)

Research supports the value of service learning incorporated in public relations classes such writing and campaigns. Although upfront planning and structure are essential for effective experiences, all players – students, clients, and instructors – must prepare for the unexpected. Not all disruptions are at the level of a pandemic, but as these students reflected, practitioners must be prepared to pivot when the need arises.

The analysis of student reflection essays provides valuable insights into how they processed the unprecedented experiences of a pandemic quarantine. The results of the 44 essays cannot be generalized, but do provide key measures to use in subsequent quantitative surveys. Additional insights from the community partners will also contribute to better understanding of how community nonprofit organizations adjust to crises and their perceptions of how service-learning initiatives may help or hinder their progress.

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Reflexive Transformative Approach to Student-Centred Learning: Insights from the Frontlines of Australian Higher Education Teaching During COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has impacted the education sector in a host of ways (including financial, operational and pedagogical), many of which are unprecedented. This article adopts a case study approach to describe the impact that COVID-19 has had on a specific university teaching and learning experience by examining how teachers at one university responded to the sudden shift to online learning. This article discusses findings from two practitioners working in Public Relations and Communication disciplines in an Australian university, focusing on three key areas of impact: *technology*, *class and content design*, and *student and staff care*. It analyses how three approaches to higher education pedagogy: student-centred learning, active learning classrooms, and teacher reflexivity have been adapted/adopted in this process as described in our "*Structure, strategy, and sensibility: Pillars of transformative teaching practice framework*." Finally, this article demonstrates that although there were obvious and disruptive challenges faced by teaching staff in shifting to online learning, these challenges were met with equally unique opportunities for personal growth, professional development and learning and teaching innovation.

Keywords: technology, pedagogy, transformative teaching, active-learning classrooms, student-centred learning, reflexivity

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COVID-19 has impacted the higher education sector in a host of ways including financial, operational and pedagogical. Many of these impacts are unprecedented and have created significant challenges for academic and professional staff, and students alike. But, whilst there were clearly significant challenges, COVID-19 provided opportunities for teachers in higher education to become more reflexive in their approach to subject and class design, and provided space for personal growth, professional development and pedagogical innovation. This article addresses the impact that COVID-19 has had on our university teaching and learning experience by using a case study approach to examine how we, as teachers in public relations and communication fields, responded to the sudden shift to online learning. By reflecting on the previous teaching session from February to June (Autumn session) 2020 in Australia, we were able to identify three key areas impacted by the shift from on campus to online teaching: technology, class and content design, and student and staff care for both our students and subject teaching teams. We discuss these areas in the "*Structure, strategy, and sensibility: Pillars of transformative teaching practice framework*" in the following sections. By reflecting on our key approaches to teaching and learning in higher education (student-centred learning, active learning classrooms, and reflexivity in teaching practice), we are able to share insights gained from this experience and suggest recommendations for future online learning.

We are transdisciplinary academics working in the field of Communication at an Australian university. Dr Kate Delmo teaches both undergraduate and post-graduate subjects across public relations, strategic communication, organisational communication and crisis communication. Dr Natalie Krikowa teaches undergraduate subjects in digital and social media that focus on user experience, social marketing, and rapid prototype development. We met weekly during the teaching session to discuss our experiences and reflect on our teaching practices. Our shared teaching philosophy is that effective learning comes from collaboration between teachers and students and that as teaching practitioners we should remain reflexive in order to improve and transform the shared learning experience. This philosophy is supported by our university's approach to teaching and learning, a flipped learning model, which emphasises student-centred learning (SLA). In this model, teachers act as facilitators and encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning while providing the framework and opportunities to develop their learning skills.

During the COVID-19 pandemic however, there were many challenges and difficulties in maintaining the student-centred approach. Many aspects of our teaching and learning strategies had to change, but it was imperative that the student-centred learning approach remained. We relied heavily on regular feedback loops with students and teaching team staff to determine what was working and what was not. There was a weekly requirement to problem-solve and the student experience ultimately drove the reflexive transformation process from Teaching Week 1. As teachers we needed to be agile, adaptive and organic. As a result, changes became instantaneous. Pre-COVID-19, reflexivity was considered going the extra mile. The Early Feedback Survey (conducted in Teaching Weeks 3 to 4 of the session) and the Student Feedback Survey (conducted at the end of the session) were two key occasions where most teachers would reflect on their teaching practice and consider improvements. Often teachers were teaching the same subjects for years and therefore changes were often minimal as the subjects were typically in good shape and working well for the face-to-face environment. During COVID-19, the informal, anecdotal feedback provided by students to teachers in between the main survey periods conducted by the university were critical to the reflexive process that ultimately led to a collaborative, student-centred learning approach during the pandemic. We received this feedback informally as verbal responses to questions posed in classes, or as personal correspondence through emails and messages. Reflexivity became a survival tool — the pandemic required frequent and urgent response to solve problems that arose in the areas of technology use, class and content design, and care given to students and our respective teaching staff in subjects that we handle. In this article, we discuss three key approaches to teaching and learning in higher education that continue to drive our teaching practice. Here we examine how these approaches were activated/adapted during COVID-19 in the subsequent move to online teaching and learning.

Background Context

When the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on the 12th of March 2020, our university in New South Wales, Australia, alongside other organisations and civic institutions followed the lockdown protocols issued by the government. This date was a few days before the first week of the Autumn teaching session commenced (in mid-February). Three days later, our university management issued a directive for the entire university to pause teaching for one week to shift student and learning activities online to align with the wider COVID-19 protocols issued by the state and federal governments.

During the paused teaching week (referred to as *pause week* from here), both academic and professional staff worked as a joint silent machinery in recreating learning activities for students through the online learning management systems (LMS) that the university prescribed. Although our university has initiated a move towards embedding online learning with face-to-face, on-campus activities in 2014, it has taken relatively small steps in fully embracing hybrid (i.e., mix of online and on-campus) teaching modes to foster a strong student-centred learning environment. When the pandemic lockdown period commenced, the entire university was compelled to reconfigure teaching and learning from mostly following an on-campus learning model to a fully online approach.

Due to time constraints, the main purpose of the pause week was for academics to find an approach to substitute for existing on-campus timetabled learning activities. In our faculty, most of the subjects follow the one-hour and two-hour tutorial mode of delivery. Initial discussions amongst academics centred more on how students can access one-hour lectures and complete two-hour tutorial activities online. Academics did not have ample resources to innovate current teaching initiatives towards a hybrid and/or flipped teaching and learning classroom experience for students that encourages an integrated and embedded approach for content provision and student engagement. Instead, the priority was to devise ways to deliver one-hour lectures and two-hour tutorial sessions online either synchronously or asynchronously. The intended effect was to follow the set timetabling schedules and for class activities to be delivered online as if they were facilitated on-campus.

Students were provided specific instructions as to whether lectures were pre-recorded or delivered live via online video conferencing softwares such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). Synchronous delivery of tutorial activities consisted of students simultaneously working on assigned tasks uploaded to the prescribed LMS with academic supervision. Asynchronous activities asked students to complete their weekly tasks independently usually with extended time provisions. Academics had to identify ways in providing formative feedback to students' weekly outputs online as well.

During the pause week, our university provided institution-wide support for academics to have last-minute changes to subject outlines approved by faculty administration and to quickly learn the appropriate technology to use for online teaching before classes resumed in a few days. Academics made amendments to the assessments and weekly tasks to fit the new parameters set for COVID-19 teaching. There were university-wide sessions offered to staff to introduce skills such as recording lectures and uploading them online, embedding low stakes quizzes in recorded lectures, using wikis on MS Teams for student collaboration, integrating apps such as Padlet, or Jamboard in archiving responses to weekly tasks, or using online polls as discussion starters in tutorials, among others. The aim of the sessions was for academics to identify which tools were simple, functional and fun to use in their respective classes to encourage student participation.

The immediate shift in teaching and learning resulted in lessons learned in pedagogical challenges and opportunities that academics are continuously discovering at our university. On the one hand, the pause week illuminated issues such as: a) identifying which technology was appropriate, functional, and available both to staff and students, b) staff members' literacy in the use of LMS, and c) determining dual formats of learning for our onshore and offshore students. Our university had a large cohort of students who were impacted by the overseas travel bans in March. Such students remained overseas for the duration of the Autumn teaching session. This entailed a customised teaching and learning approach in relation to the following issues: bandwidth and interconnectivity concerns, time zone differences, and restricted access to certain websites and social media platforms that were used in weekly activities. For example, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube are key sites used in subjects offered by our faculty. During the pause week, academics had to immediately create alternative learning toolkits or weekly tutorial packages solely to be accessed by overseas students. The learning toolkits consisted of written instructional materials that provided a step-by-step guide for students to follow in navigating the technological requirements on a weekly basis. This was on top of the challenge in simultaneously delivering weekly subject matter to our onshore students.

Teachers learned and relearned to maximise the university's LMS and other online softwares that led to an opportunity for us to recognise technology, literacy, adaptability, and reflexivity as integral to effective and efficient teaching and learning during, and perhaps even after the pandemic. The directive for online teaching under COVID-19 protocols paved the way for academics to avoid some of the reluctance in embracing the possibilities of innovating pedagogies around a purposeful use of an appropriate mix of technology in the classroom. It is significant to gather insights from us academics — the essential frontliners in the education sector — on our lived experiences in teaching under the global lockdown period. In particular, we describe in this paper our key learnings on the role of reflexivity as a transformative teaching and learning practice in creating a student-centred, active learning environment during the initial weeks of teaching during the pandemic.

Conceptual Framework of Teaching Philosophy

Our shared teaching philosophy is that learning is a collaboration between teachers and students and that as teaching practitioners we should remain reflexive in order to improve the shared learning experience. This paper discusses three key approaches to teaching and learning in higher education that drives our teaching practice: *student-centred learning*, *active learning classrooms*, and *reflexivity* in teaching practice. It examines how these approaches were activated during COVID-19 and the subsequent move to online teaching and learning.

A student-centred learning approach (SLA) encourages students to take more responsibility for their learning and is a process that relies heavily on teachers' professional confidence to surrender traditional teaching responsibilities (McCabe & O'Connor, 2014). SLA is ubiquitous throughout pedagogy literature (see Akerlind 2008; Gibbs & Coffey 2004; Kember 1997; Samuelowicz & Bain 2001; Trigwell et al.,1994) and appears in many university and higher education strategic documents. Many studies cite Rogers as the origin of student-centred learning, and in particular Rogers and Freiberg's *Freedom to Learn* (1994). In this seminal text, the authors criticise the expert driven, transmission model of university teaching and suggest adapting their "client-centred" approach to counselling to the education arena (Tangney, 2014, p. 266). Research has endorsed the incentives of a collaborative student-centred community (Gilis et al., 2008; Hardie, 2007; Maclellan, 2008), "although it is inherent that deep methodology can be an anathema for some" (McCabe & O'Connor, 2014, p. 354).

As mentioned earlier, our university has undertaken a formal institution-wide learner-focused approach to teaching and learning since 2014. This flipped learning model (as described above) emphasises student-centred learning (SLA), where ownership of learning is shared between the teachers and students. In this model teachers act as facilitators and encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning while providing the framework and opportunities to develop their learning skills. This facilitation role has been discussed in many studies over the past two decades (Blumberg, 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2002; Weimer, 2002) all of which emphasise the transformative potential for our understanding of teaching and learning practice.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, there were many challenges and difficulties in maintaining the student-centred approach which are inherent to adopting SLA in general. These include having limited preparation, competing timetables, resistance from other staff, student reluctance and teachers' lack of confidence (McCabe & O'Connor, 2014, p. 351). The only preparation time we were afforded in shifting our classes online was our pause week. We had less than six days to completely redesign our subjects for online delivery, select online platforms to deliver our classes and learn them (then teach them to our teaching teams made up of mostly casual/sessional academics). We then had to redesign assessment tasks and weekly content often on a week-to-week basis. Integral to the ability to adopt SLA is a realistic time frame for effective implementation (Felder & Brent, 1996; Lea et al., 2003) and six days is certainly less than ideal.

Pedagogical methods such as student-centred learning are highly context-dependent (Harju & Åkerblom, 2017) and students are not a homogeneous group (Attard et al., 2010). There is no “one-size-fits-all” model. This is even more apt when it comes to student’s learning online. What is consistent across many contexts is the humanist approach to SLA. Tangney (2014) highlights consistent ideas about SLA environments that emerge from the humanist literature, including:

- students should have a choice in what they do and how they do it (and subsequent responsibilities of that choice);
- an underlying faith that students have the potential to make appropriate choices (to them) and maximise their potential; and
- students are learning in an environment with little power differential, and where unconditional positive regard and attendance to feelings is central, among others.

This humanist approach to student-centred learning is essential in our university’s model of teaching and learning as it foregrounds the student in the learning process and emphasises the role of the teacher in providing the environment in which the students can best learn. During the pandemic, we were encouraged to move away from traditional lecture-style modes of teaching delivery to an active learning model that highlights peer learning and collaboration as key approaches to effective class design.

Prior to COVID-19, most of our face-to-face on campus classes were conducted in collaborative classrooms where active-learning was emphasised. These physical spaces intended to promote peer interaction, engagement and collaboration. Collaborative or active learning classrooms (ALCs) are designed to facilitate collaborative learning activities, minimise the barrier between teacher and student, and to improve teaching practices (Baepler & Walker, 2014; Carpenter, 2013; Metzger, 2015). ALCs can be regarded as rich environments for collaborative, problem-based learning involving dynamic, interdisciplinary and generative learning activities with the goal of achieving higher order thinking and constructing complex knowledge (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). Although active learning pedagogies, such as peer learning, team-based learning, cooperative learning, or blended learning (flipped classroom) can certainly apply in traditional classrooms with fixed seat setting (Deslauriers et al., 2011; Lyon & Lagowski, 2008; Mazur, 2009), a better space for these pedagogies are ALCs designed specifically for student interaction and engagement (Chiu & Cheng, 2017, pp. 269-270).

When COVID-19 happened the question for us was how do we translate "active learning" to the online classroom? We had less than a week to not only interrogate this question and what it meant pedagogically, but rapidly devise a new approach to teaching and learning for the online environment that (as best as possible) mirrored the active learning classroom with which both students and teachers were already familiar.

The above required many teachers to adopt a more *reflective* and *reflexive* approach to teaching practice. On the one hand, reflectivity which is essential to both student and teacher learning is "the use of personal values, experiences, and habits to make meaning" (Wilhelm, 2013, p. 57). Most teachers will undertake some form of reflection throughout their teaching session to identify areas for improvement. Reflective teachers operate in a mode referred to as "knowledge-in-action" whereby they reflect upon their specific content knowledge and teaching practices that are established through their past experience (Brookfield, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). This reflective practice can be seen before a new teaching session begins as teachers prepare their subjects for delivery. Some teachers use formal student feedback surveys to determine what worked and what did not work, from the student perspective.

Reflexivity, on the other hand, is an ongoing internal dialogue that leads to action for transformative practices in the classroom (Archer, 2012). Jeffrey D. Wilhelm (2013), a thought-leader in this field, suggests that reflexivity requires that we "suspend […] our own assumptions in order to understand what someone else brings to [our] understanding, learning, and practice, whether this someone else is a historical figure, a student, or a colleague" (p. 57). Taking a more "epistemic reflexivity" approach encourages internal dialogue on personal epistemology to facilitate meaningful and sustainable change in our teaching (Feucht et al., 2017, p. 234). Having the required time and space is needed in order to be reflexive. Under the unprecedented COVID-19 conditions, however, it was challenging to maintain a reflexive process due to the scope and immediacy of changes that academics had to make.

Discussion of Reflexive Transformation

The sudden shift to online learning due to COVID-19 brought with it many challenges, but also opened up many opportunities to improve the learning experience for both students and teachers alike. By reflecting on the Autumn 2020 teaching session, we were able to elucidate three key areas impacted by the shift from on campus to online teaching: technology, class and content design, and care for both our students and subject teaching teams. By reflecting on our key approaches to teaching and learning (student-centred learning, active learning classrooms, and reflexivity in teaching practice), we were able to develop a transformative teaching practice framework developed from the insights gained from this experience. This framework, referred to as the "*Structure, strategy, and sensibility: Pillars of transformative teaching practice framework"* (illustrated below) is a model that demonstrates how these philosophies and practices intersect. The model underpins the discussion in the following sections.

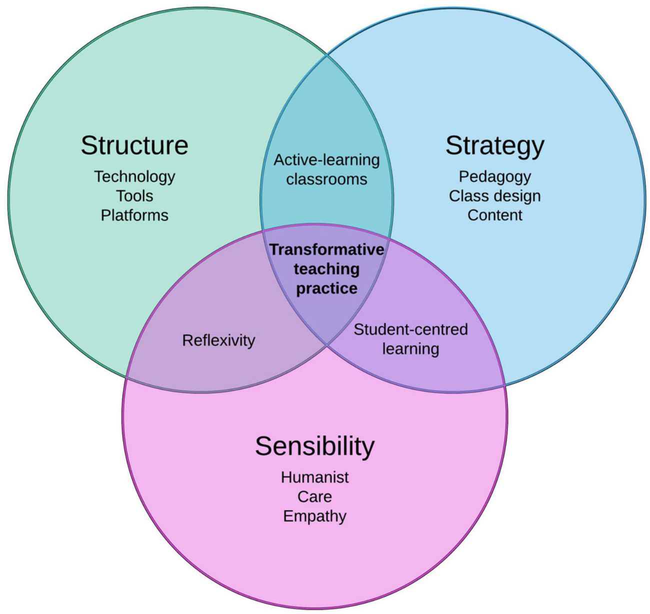

Figure 1: *Structure, strategy, and sensibility: Pillars of transformative teaching practice framework* (2020)

Structure Pillar: Technology

The initial shift to online learning that occurred in the pause week emphasised subject and assessment redesign and the quick adoption of online platforms including Zoom and MS Teams (in addition to our university's LMS). Directives coming from university management and administration were centred around what teachers or academics needed to do to ensure their subjects could run in an online mode (e.g., checking assessment tasks were individual tasks where possible and writing new tasks if required). For most teachers this also meant re/familiarising themselves with the technologies. The university promptly provided technology workshops, however these focused on the practical how-to's and not necessarily on how best to use the platforms for pedagogical purposes. Teachers were given many technological options to explore, but due to time constraints were forced to make quick decisions.

What was missing for most during these crucial paused teaching days was input from the students on how they felt about online learning. Jenkins (2014) argues that students are mostly left to navigate a complex and often confusing array of programmes and services on their own. In Nomkhosi Xulu-Gama et al.'s 2018 study, students commented that the main concerns experienced when adapting to the university experience included access to technology (in particular Wi-Fi), confidence in the use of the university online learning management system, and computer literacy skills. For our continuing students, their sudden move to online learning already raised similar concerns, and yet we were also dealing with a large cohort of commencing students, who now had to orient themselves to online learning on top of university learning more generally.

It was important during the pause week to identify the technological capability of our students. Some students lived in urban environments, with good access to broadband internet, however some students lived in more rural areas with patchy access, and others were joining from overseas. Many of our overseas students were impacted by travel bans or were being quarantined in hotels during the first few weeks of the session, and many struggled to gain access to our technology platforms and participate in our classes.

In one subject with a high overseas student contingent, we sent out a survey in the pause week to all students in the subject to determine their current technology capabilities and preferences. The survey enquired about their levels of comfort in using particular technologies and platforms (video conferencing, LMS etc.) as well as their access to a reliable computer, internet connection and video/camera/audio technology. Without these necessary technological elements, students would struggle to participate in online classes. Students were also asked if they had any accessibility requirements that would require specific modification to class materials or delivery, or if they had external circumstances that might impact their ability to study online remotely, such as health conditions, career responsibilities, or frontline/essential worker considerations. The information obtained through the survey allowed the subject to be tailored to meet the needs of the students undertaking the subject as best as possible. This student-centred approach remained throughout the teaching session.

The main challenge was discovering how to adopt an active learning environment in the online classroom. Our current LMS was not suited to full online course delivery and lacked appropriate interactive and collaborative functions. As a result, many staff were encouraged to adopt Zoom for live tutorials and lectures and MS Teams for asynchronous class activities. Most staff and students were new to these platforms and lacked the required digital literacy to effectively use them. Many teachers needed to be taught how to use the platforms first, before then utilising them for their teaching and learning. Zoom was relatively easy to adopt and all students required was a Zoom link and then they could join at the required time. MS Teams, however, was intended to be used as a collaborative working platform that required both staff and students to be active and contribute content to the platform. The platform was not necessarily designed to be used for the kinds of activities that teachers were hoping to use it for, but it provided a space for classes to share and collaborate in similar ways to that seen in active learning classrooms.

MS Teams allowed us to create weekly channels for all that week's content (including peer learning activities), files and resources and facilitate discussions among small and large groups. The video chat tool allowed the teacher to host a large group meeting, and then have smaller groups go into separate chats with one another to complete the activities before then coming back into a main group meeting for debriefing and discussion. The Wiki widget/tool was used over a three-week period to build understanding of key concepts by having students contribute one concept a week in groups of three. This cooperative learning activity remained an archived resource for the rest of the session that students could refer to when completing their assessments.

Students were surveyed again at the completion of the subject to better understand their experience of online learning and to hopefully gain insight into further improvements and refinement to be made for the next session which was also going to remain online due to COVID-19. The survey was completed by 54 students and 60% of respondents said that they found the use of MS Teams useful for collaborating with peers. When asked if they would prefer to use MS Teams and Zoom in future, 82% said they would use MS Teams again and 48% said they would use Zoom.

When maintaining reflexivity in teaching practice, the easiest place to start is often the learning environment itself. By engaging the students in the reflexive process and gaining their insights through regular feedback loops, meant that changes to the learning environment could be swifter and often more innovative. Students clearly appreciated being involved in the construction of their learning environment and by the end of the session were able to articulate the benefits and shortfalls of particular technology platforms.

Strategy Pillar: Class and Content Design

Teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic saw the emergence of reflexivity as a critical tool in adapting to the changing classroom experience. The immediate shift to online teaching led to a further emphasis on the importance of using a reflexive teaching approach anchored in student-centric learning experience (Tangney, 2014). Although subject descriptions were revised to reflect the online teaching environment, we observed that our teaching strategy and tactics changed frequently based on constant feedback from students and our teaching staff.

In terms of class content and design, we were encouraged to pre-record our lectures for students to access prior to their tutorials. This proved especially helpful to our students who were still overseas due to the travel bans. One of the early decisions made by individual faculty members during the pause week was to determine what types of tutorial learning activities could best be delivered synchronously or asynchronously, or a mix of both. Synchronous activities consisted of class activities that students worked on simultaneously with academic supervision and completed during the prescribed tutorial hours. Teachers used Zoom or the video call function of MS Teams as the main online conferencing tools that allowed students to collaborate with each other in small groups. Asynchronous activities included online group work that students completed independently usually outside of tutorial hours. Canvas and Blackboard were the primary learning management systems used by the University. Both served as key archival and student engagement portals that helped us design and deliver subject content.

Teaching in a fully online environment resulted in consistent, ongoing reflexivity in terms of re-designing subject content and delivery. As the teaching session progressed, we learned that the decisions we made regarding class and content design during the pause week did not work for the succeeding weeks as initially planned. Prior to the pandemic, adjusting teaching and learning strategy and tactics as the session unfolds occurred regularly. During the pandemic, the need for constant updating of strategy and tactics happened more frequently, mostly on a weekly basis. Knowledge-in-action (Brookfield, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 2013) was unfolding more rapidly and organically. Most of the changes were either based on observation or informal feedback gathered from our students and teaching staff.

In one subject, where classes ran Tuesday through Friday, the first Tuesday morning class was used as a "trial" tutorial. Activities or strategies would be tested in that class, and anything that could be tweaked to improve those activities or strategies would be quickly rolled out across the other classes. These "tweaks" were communicated informally, using a shared MS Teams site for the teaching team. Teachers were then encouraged to provide feedback on how the activities and strategies were received in their own classes. This constant feedback loop meant that changes could be made for the following classes and could be tailored to suit the conditions of each class.

There was less reluctance to be flexible and resilient in developing weekly workshop activities as compared to hesitations we had in changing teaching plans mid-way of the teaching session pre-COVID-19. More importantly, the reflexive approach that emerged was highly motivated by exploring ways to keep our students interested and engaged in their first experience of mandatory remote studying. For example, in one of our undergraduate public relations subjects, by Week 4 (two weeks after the pause week), we learned that students felt less pressured to work on certain tasks asynchronously because they save time in "getting group discussions going" (Anonymous, Student Feedback Survey comment, June 2020). Through informal feedback gathered before a Zoom class concluded, some students remarked that working on some tasks asynchronously helped them minimise broadband costs because there was no live streaming content. There were some, conversely, who found asynchronous activities "overwhelming" (Anonymous, Student Feedback Survey comment, June 2020). As one of our overseas postgraduate students explained, "It is hard to be left alone working on the Canvas exercises with no one to ask if you are on the right track or not" (Z. Zhou, personal communication, May 10, 2020).

Guided by these insights, we decided to intersperse a few more asynchronous activities with the initially planned synchronous ones. For the asynchronous tasks, this entailed providing more instructional and contextual details to make the tasks more structured and coherent. We

developed numerous last-minute user guides for students to help them in their workshop participation such as activating mobile/software apps (e.g. Jamboard, Padlet) that are applicable to PR campaign brainstorming sessions. Pre-COVID-19 where most teaching was done face-to-face, explaining details about apps was done verbally in class, hence avoiding the need to prepare written instructional documents beforehand.
As one first-year student explained:

> Having a chance to work on some tasks individually and outside of the tutorial times in certain weeks made me focus on the content more. Sometimes, online group activities that need to be finished within class hours can be rushed, people are just typing away without really discussing things. I quite liked it that you [Kate Delmo] still gave us feedback in time for the following week's tutorial. It made all the work worthwhile! (Anonymous, Student Feedback Survey, June 2020)

The need to simplify weekly activities was another ongoing priority during the initial phase of teaching under the lockdown period. We noticed that student engagement was more focused and structured if students in Zoom breakout rooms were working on fewer activities. Pre-COVID-19, a two-hour tutorial session usually allowed students to work on a cluster of three small-group activities. After the pandemic occurred, we followed the same format, thinking that the platform of delivery would not affect the quality of student engagement. However, by Week 3, students felt rushed in finishing all the tasks. This observation led us to change both content and number of assigned activities for the students, moving to one major activity/case study but adding more discussion questions.

The timing of publishing course materials online via the university's LMS also changed mid-way into the teaching session. Our postgraduate public relations students who were currently overseas due to the travel bans offered feedback that they had difficulties in accessing the materials online real-time, and most importantly, some of the URLs of websites we used were restricted from their location. In response, we developed separate learning materials for our onshore and offshore students to ensure that both cohorts were given equal opportunities to learn the content. We searched for alternative URLs that were accessible from China in order to give our students there an opportunity to work on the tasks remotely. Eventually, our university gave us a summary list of websites that overseas students could and could not use. We also made the online modules available to all students at least three days earlier.

Finally, establishing a sustainable system for providing feedback on students' weekly online outputs was also a part of the overall strategy in designing course content during the early weeks of teaching during the pandemic. We maximized the use of Google Docs, MS Teams worksheets, Blackboard wikis, among others so we are able to provide general feedback on students' group activities. The shared-screen functionality of Zoom and MS Teams rendered useful when students discussed highlights of their group discussions to the wider class.

One student remarked:

> It is helpful to see that the tutor [teacher] already wrote comments on some of our answers to the discussion questions. This helped us further explain what we wanted to say to the rest of the class. (Anonymous, Student Feedback Survey, June 2020)

Online teaching during the pandemic made us more aware of the student learning experience. There was more room for flexibility both in macro and micro strategies in designing and delivering subject content that is meaningful to students. By continuing to place students at the centre of the learning design process we also ensured that their perspectives, feelings and circumstances were taken into consideration.

Sensibility Pillar: Care and Empathy to Students and Staff

The final area within which we focused our reflexive practice was in the care of those we were ultimately responsible for — our students and fellow teaching team staff. Being a reflexive teaching practitioner meant securing the perspectives of others, including students and fellow teachers. If we did not consider and understand the unique circumstances that our students and teaching team were now experiencing, it did not matter what technologies we utilised or how we designed our classes, it would be all for naught.

What we found, through our weekly virtual face-to-face classes, was that students ultimately wanted someone to care about them and empathise with what they were going through. Many of our undergraduate students were losing their jobs and having to move home. We saw statistically significant higher levels of referrals to our university's counselling services and accessibility services for stress, anxiety and depression. As Black Dog Institute (an Australian mental health charity) notes, those who are unemployed or from a casualised workforce are at increased risk of mental health deterioration during times of economic instability such as pandemics. They state that "high job insecurity is associated with stress, financial strain, poorer health and increased rates of depression and anxiety" (Black Dog Institute, 2020, p. 2). It was no surprise to those of us teaching on the frontlines of this pandemic that our students were suffering.

For university students, intensified levels of psychological distress and subsequent negative academic consequences were widespread pre-COVID-19 (American College Health Association, 2019 cited in Grubic et al., 2020). It was clear that these mental health concerns were exacerbated by COVID-19 and were unsurprisingly having a detrimental impact on students' ability to complete their educational responsibilities. In a survey by YoungMinds (a UK-based youth mental health charity), it was

reported that 83% of young respondents felt that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing mental health conditions, with 32% claiming it made their mental health much worse (YoungMinds, 2020, p. 3).
As Grubic, Badovinac & Johri (2020) point out:

> By increasing academic stressors in a population with heightened pre-existing stress levels and a potentially reduced ability to rely on typical coping strategies – such as family who themselves may be experiencing heightened distress – the COVID-19 pandemic has placed an unprecedented mental health burden on students, which urgently requires further examination and immediate intervention. (p. 517)

For the subjects we teach, we held weekly catch ups with our students as a means to check how they were coping with the challenging life in lockdown. We also reminded our individual teaching team staff (tutors) that it did not matter if the weekly activities did not go as planned. What was important was for us to be patient and understanding with our students, so they felt their concerns were heard and resolved. Oftentimes this meant starting Zoom classes with a "check-in" where students were invited to share their worries or inversely their small victories. We invited our pets to class for show and tell and discussed our favourite TikToks of the week. For the first 15-20 minutes, human connection was prioritised. Then, once the students felt grounded and secure, we could begin exploring the content and activities.

As greater emphasis was placed on listening to students' situations, it also became apparent that clearer guidelines needed to be put in place to provide a structure to those communications. Teaching staff were seeing a huge influx of emails and MS Teams messages requesting for more one-on-one assistance or addressing students' personal issues. The immediacy of digital communication meant that many students assumed their teacher would respond immediately to their query. Mid-way through the session, many teachers were having to re-establish boundaries and set clear expectations on the extent of support given to students in between classes via emails and messages. This required more clearly defined consultation hours centred around staff availability. This became even more important when communicating with overseas students, who required greater support but were in different time zones as ours. Students were slow to respond to these expectations and frequently required reminding. They were, however, grateful to receive the added support and care.

Overall, students were kind in their formal and informal feedback, acknowledging the extra work required by their teachers in shifting their classes online. On the whole, students appreciated that it was a difficult situation for everyone and appreciated the efforts by the university to keep their classes running while keeping them and their communities safe. Some students even emailed personal notes of thanks to their teachers in recognition of their work and care.

One third-year student remarked:

> You definitely put the students first in every way and I really appreciate that - couldn't have asked for a better tutor for this subject. It's been such a difficult time for everyone, with COVID-19 taking such a hit on Universities, and I commend the seamlessness of the move to online learning in DPA. Hats off to you and the rest of the team for putting so much time and energy into adjusting the course so flawlessly. (M. Sacks, personal communication, June 12, 2020)

Another student remarked:

> In short, I am impressed with the transition online and how classes are run in these unusual times. You are an outstanding educator, with clear direction, expectations and assistance that goes way over the extra mile. Your teaching style is thoroughly enjoyable from your positive attitude and clear care for us students. Moreover I

> would like to commend you, and the team. (M. Billingham-Yuen, personal communication, May 28, 2020)

Student care was a key focus in the reflexive process, but equally as important was the concern and care for the staff in our teaching teams. Reflexivity meant touching base consistently and openly with the teaching team. While pre-COVID-19 teaching conditions required less focus on wellbeing for staff, there was still an emphasis on collaboration for consistency in teaching delivery. The shift to online and the consequent adoption of new technologies required subject coordinators to provide education and support to their teaching teams to ensure digital literacy across these technologies and platforms. During the pause week, there was also added work on the part of the coordinator to provide crash course, last-minute training on technology use for our part-time casual academics. For some coordinators this meant ongoing, closer mentoring of casual academic teaching staff to improve confidence and competency in running online classes. This extra training on top of their own personal COVID-19 situation also increased their stress and anxiety levels. Many were now also having to do more training and preparation for online classes, all of which was extra unpaid work. During COVID-19, teaching staff were provided with detailed weekly tutorial guides to outline objectives, teaching tactics and desired learning outcomes, but due to the agile approach to class design improvement, these were often given only days before classes were scheduled.

Previously, staff feedback in terms of their overall experience in teaching on the subject was procured sporadically during the session and at the end of the session. During COVID-19, regular/weekly Zoom meetings were used to provide necessary briefings and roadmaps about what lay ahead and get feedback on their teaching experiences. But these meetings were also valuable opportunities to check in on the teaching team's mental health and wellbeing. It was important to check in on how people were feeling on a regular basis and ensure we communicated about our own wellbeing.

One teaching staff member who teaches in one of our public relations major subject said:

> With all these abrupt changes, thank goodness for these weekly briefing sessions prior to class time. As industry practitioners who are part-time teaching, we have been trained mostly to share content and experience with students. But these changes in online teaching is something else, it is a crash course to teaching methods for me. Thank you for not getting tired in guiding us in this journey. (E. Barclay, personal communication, June 10, 2020)

Discussing our shared and unique experiences helped build stronger collegial relationships and human connection. It was crucial that we maintain human connections, as connection is one of the most protective factors contributing to our emotional wellbeing. We emphasised the importance of everyone in the team taking the time to take care of their own wellbeing and to reach out if they needed support. We found ourselves more in touch with our part-time colleagues during COVID-19 teaching because we knew that being expected to fully and immediately comply with the university's directives in online teaching was challenging to their part-time employment status.

What COVID-19 brought home was the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with our students and fellow teaching staff. It forced us to be more empathetic and responsive to others' needs. It encouraged us to listen, rather than speak, and to provide safe spaces for our students and staff to share their concerns and worries. While it may have placed a heavier burden on those coordinating the subjects, the efforts were not in vain. Our classrooms became transformative spaces and ultimately opportunities opened up for personal growth, professional development and learning and teaching innovation.

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

In conclusion, we surmise that at the intersection of transformative teaching practice during COVID-19, the three pillars of structure (technology), strategy (class and content design) and sensibility (student and staff pastoral care) create active-learning classrooms (Archer, 2012), student-centred learning experience (Gilis et al., 2008; Hardie, 2007; Maclellan, 2008), and reflexivity in teaching practice (Wilhelm, 2013). Despite issues in technological literacy, bandwidth and interconnectivity, and in overall pedagogical changes brought by an immediate switch to a fully online teaching platform, we found that the pace and rhythm of teaching and learning during the initial phase of the COVID-19 lockdown was highly guided by feedback that we gathered from the frontlines – our daily and/or weekly engagement with our students and our teaching staff.

The importance of a reflective and reflexive approach to teaching became more instrumental as compared to how these guided our teaching pedagogy prior to the pandemic. In hindsight, we were not certain if the changes we introduced at the beginning of the Autumn 2020 teaching session would work for us or to our students and our teaching teams. The humanist approach to teaching (Tangney, 2014) ultimately emerged as the lynchpin of our teaching and learning practice. Every week during the Autumn session, we found ourselves asking two simple but highly critical questions. First, *what worked and did not work last week?* Then, based on feedback from the first question, *what adjustments do we have to make for our students to learn this topic in a structured and engaging way next week?*

This type of reflective thought purely guided by principles of student-centred learning and unfolding on a weekly basis was not as prominent to our teaching and learning methods prior to COVID-19. It is aligned with how scholars in teaching and learning pedagogy describe knowledge-in-action (Brookfield, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 2013).

However, during COVID-19, we were not only using student feedback to change our teaching for the following teaching session, we were making changes for the following week, every week. In addition, the process was reflexive for us: we were constantly self-checking our classroom methods. This is similar to what Archer (2012) explained that a person who is reflexive engages in ongoing, internal dialogue that leads to action. It also embodied epistemic reflexivity among teachers (Feucht et al., 2017) in a high-pressure, unprecedented situation (COVID-19) that resulted in meaningful changes in our teaching.

This case study looked at one university within a specific regional and environmental context. As such, its findings are limited to those universities within similar contexts. We understand that faculty in different regions and countries will have had different experiences depending on a number of factors. Future research will broaden the reflexive transformative approach to student-centred learning by examining it in other university contexts (both nationally and globally) and outside of COVID-19-like environmental conditions. What would be of interest is how this "Pillars of transformative teaching practice framework" could be applied in other public relations and broader communication subjects, programs and degrees. Future applications of this framework could provide valuable insights into how it can be adopted effectively in other higher education settings. Similarly, identifying and comparing other COVID-19 responses from other disciplines and universities could further expand our understanding of how students were impacted by the pandemic and the subsequent remodelled approach to teaching and learning.

Within the context of our university response, the immediate shift to online subject delivery required a change in teaching and learning outlook both for students and staff in our university. We learned that these changes were not simply "putting things online" as what we initially did during the pause week in the initial days of COVID-19 teaching. There are pedagogical aspects to consider from a macro level such as corresponding changes in the following: staff and student expectations, overall learning pace in the online space, extent and depth of engagement both for staff and students, managing feedback, assessing student progress online, staff's availability in addressing student concerns, and drawing the line in managing communication channels with students, among others. It helps if students understand these realities so they can equally manage their learning expectations.

Teaching during the initial phase of the pandemic brings key learnings that will introduce more changes to our active-learning classrooms. To date, we are gradually learning that a fully online delivery of classes is not, and should not be viewed as, a direct substitute for face-to-face, on-campus classes. The pace of and expectations in learning are different for both platforms. Beyond COVID-19, we envision that a hybrid teaching approach that combines online and on-campus learning experience will increasingly be a core pedagogical model to follow. A hybrid model introduces innovation, but it should be anchored in the principle of co-creation between students and staff in universities. The changing teaching and learning ecosystem in higher education will continuously undergo changes after lived experiences of the teachers during the global lockdown period.

Postscript

It is important as COVID-19 continues to impact our lives, workplaces and educational experiences, that teachers maintain a reflexive, transformative approach to student learning. In Australia, city and state-wide lockdowns have once again moved learning online in 2021, and with an uncertain future, online and hybrid learning will remain to some degree. Both teachers and students are feeling the effects of online fatigue and many students are expressing emotional and mental distress. As a result, teachers are reporting that student welfare is their number one priority in their approach to teaching in 2021. Whilst many of the approaches made during the first response to COVID-19 teaching and learning in 2020 can and have been adopted again, sustaining a reflexive approach to learning means that teachers can respond to new challenges quickly and remain agile. Adopting a transformative teaching framework enables teachers to reflect on the structures of their teaching and learning (technologies, tools and platforms used), devise and revise strategies around pedagogy, class design and content delivery, and embrace a student-centred learning approach where empathy, care and humanity are at the core of teaching practice in these uncertain times.

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PRSSA During COVID-19: Examining the Challenges and Best Practices of Student Organization Management in an Online World

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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 2020, much of the U.S. implemented a nationwide shutdown in response to the global pandemic COVID-19 that had a ripple effect on universities to close campuses. In the hard shift to online learning, many student organizations were left with little input about how to make their own transition to the digital realm. Through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, the following study surveyed current and recent PRSSA executive board members (n = 208) to gain insights about online chapter programming practices in the spring and fall terms of 2020, key concerns about online chapter management, and what online program training and resources are needed. Research-based best practices for online chapter management offer practical guidance for PRSSA chapters and support organizations to improve chapter leaders' confidence and proficiency in producing online programming during COVID-19 and beyond.

Keywords: online organization, student organizations, Zoom, online learning, self-determination theory, COVID-19, PRSSA, Public Relations Student Society of America

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In the spring of 2020, much of the United States (U.S). implemented a nationwide shutdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such drastic nationwide actions had not been taken since the Spanish Flu outbreak more than 100 years ago. As U.S. states issued stay-at-home orders, that had a ripple effect on universities to close campuses and send students home, often with little notice to students, faculty, and staff. While classes remained in session through online modalities, the robust campus life experience waned. In the hard shift to online learning, many student organizations were left with little input about how to make their own transition to the digital realm.

This study examined how one such student organization, the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), fared with online programming during COVID-19 in the spring and fall terms of 2020. A nationwide questionnaire was distributed to PRSSA executive board (e-board) members to determine what programming strategies and communication tools were used by chapters, which individuals and organizations provided guidance with online programming planning, key concerns of e-board members, and what types of training they desired to effectively manage their chapters in the online environment. This research is the third paper in a trio of PRSSA and pedagogical-related papers that uses Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a basis for study to serve as a practical guide for PRSSA chapters and support organizations in developing innovative chapter management solutions and collaborative partnerships that will build a thriving community during COVID-19 and beyond.

Literature Review

PRSSA in a Pre-COVID-19 World

To study the effects of the pandemic on student organizations, the pre-pandemic structure of student organizations has to be established. Todd's (2009) study of PRSSA, in particular, uncovered that professional advisers felt the organization would best serve students by acting as a bridge toward the professional world. That connection included having current PR practitioners assess student capstone projects, focusing on essential writing and web design skills. A look at the difference between universities with and without a PRSSA chapter illuminated the benefits of the organization even further. Previous research noted that faculty advisers considered PRSSA a "critical component" to the undergraduate experience and felt the organization had a responsibility to facilitate leadership development, provide aid in finding internships, and emulate real work practice before entering the field (Weed et al., 2020; Rogers, 2014). Apart from the applicability of the organization's activities, students also joined and stayed in student organizations through self-determined motivations that stemmed from their needs being met (Filak & Pritchard, 2007). That implies students join PRSSA not only for the professional connections, but to build upon their personal goals as well.

Organization Issues in an Online World During COVID-19

In spring of 2020 universities were tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, driving PRSSA chapters to navigate a disrupted world in an attempt to #FlattenTheCurve (Merritt, 2020). Graduations were canceled. Classes were rushed into an online modality. Businesses also learned to navigate a 100% virtual work environment forcing students to "make the most of a summer without a traditional internship" (Charron, 2020, para. 1). Likewise, university extracurricular activities were also in unfamiliar territory. In April 2020, the PRSSA National Leadership Assembly was relegated to a virtual town hall with officer elections moved online (PRSA, 2020), Star Chapter requirements were reduced and amended to remove the high school outreach component, and for the first time in PRSSA history, the international conference took place online (PRSSA, 2020). PRSSA members and faculty advisers were attempting to navigate change and preparing for a "new normal" during a tumultuous time on campuses across the nation. This subsequently presented new challenges and opportunities to organizations run by volunteer students and faculty.

Higher Education Issues

Very little was known pre-COVID-19 regarding how students, required to move to an online learning environment from an in-class learning environment, might react during a widespread emergency. Post COVID-19 the literature is starting to emerge concerning general online teaching and learning perspectives during COVID-19 suggesting lessons learned in updating online pedagogy to meet the needs of students (Coman et al., 2020; Hofer et al., 2021; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Rippé et al., 2021). Luckily, much attention has been paid in recent years toward student and faculty use of technology in the public relations classroom, in building community (Curtin & Witherspoon, 2000; Fraustino et al., 2015; Janoske et al., 2019; Kinsky et al., 2016; Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013; McKeever, 2019; Moore, 2014; Tatone et al., 2017; Weed et al., 2018;) and to online teaching and learning in general (Martin, Stamper et al., 2020; Martin, Sun et al., 2020; Nilson & Goodson, 2018) to supplement as the body of knowledge continues to grow post-COVID-19; however, the literature does more to point out the flaws in the online learning system than the solutions (Albrahim, 2020; Morreale et al., 2021; Richardson et al., 2020). The teaching of faculty on how to transition online seems to be one of those missteps as sometimes faculty are left to figure out how to teach online completely on their own (Callo & Yazon, 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2019; Paul & Jefferson, 2019).

Organizational Issues

COVID-19 presented numerous communication challenges to organizations as the traditional in-person workplace moved to remote work. In times of crises, subordinates turn to leaders for information, which heightens demands for effective communication of critical decisions (van der Meer et al., 2017; van Zoonen & van der Meer, 2015) much like PRSSA advisers and members might look to PRSSA National for solutions. Organizational issues pre-COVID-19 are only exacerbated during COVID-19. Thus, engaging now in thoughtful deconstruction of pre-COVID-19 practices can create deliberate and practical organizational improvement, even whilst forced through severe ecological conditions which present as “crisis” or misfortune. There may be hope that these online tools can contribute to organizational engagement in times of uncertainty. When looking at natural disasters that result in a shift to online learning, one study showed that a university became more resilient in its online education after a crisis event (Ayebi-Arthur, 2017). However, proper tools including bandwidth, internet equity, and access to digital devices are key components in guaranteeing that students do not miss educational opportunities during such a crisis (Dhawan, 2020). Ensuring proper equity toward online learning can be important for not only the students involved but the health of the overall learning organization. According to Coombs and Holladay (1996), effectively communicating to an organization’s public is crucial to the reputational and financial health of any organization, regardless of industry. In this instance, ensuring that effective communication is maintained between all educational participants is crucial in sustaining an online learning environment.

Self-Determination Theory and Organization Management

When broken down to its basic ideology, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) looks at the psychological pull of an individual toward personal growth and the effect external forces have on the motivation toward that growth (Deci, 1975; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation is important to examine as it is the catalyst to get work done (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT considers motivation based on a person’s motivation at any given time, as opposed to adopting motivation as a unitary concept in people (Deci, 1975). As PRSSA is a student-run organization, organizational leaders do not have the common motivating factor of financial-based compensation for their work and must find their intrinsic motivations for participation. Filak and Pritchard (2007) established the application of SDT in the context of PRSSA in a study of chapter advisers and members, and found that when the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness were met through support from the faculty adviser, student members will more positively rate their chapter and adviser, and experience greater self-motivation to participate in the organization.

White (1959) and deCharms (1968) proposed that motivating behavior is based on competence and autonomy. That the link between the basic needs of people and their motivations is based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Pritchard et al., 1977). Findings from Jang (2008) show the role that externally-provided rationales can play in helping students generate the motivation they need to engage in, and learn from, uninteresting but personally important material. That is critical to teaching and professional development in order to promote student motivation by promoting the value of the task, discover the experience's hidden value, and communicate why it is personally useful to the participant. "Simply put, motivation is tantamount to a student's ability to engage with the course information" (Ewing et al., 2019, p. 105). SDT research has been applied in pedagogy research to examine how needs are satisfied in face-to-face teaching and learning in relation to student motivation (Ahn et al., 2021; Davidson & Beck, 2019; Goldman et al., 2017; Lietaert et al., 2015; Pritchard et al., 1977; Roorda et al., 2011).

Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness

Ryan and Deci (2000) proposed three psychological needs that are required for individual psychological health and well-being: a) competence (seek to control the outcome of a task and experience task mastery), b) autonomy (the desire to be causal agents of one's own life and act in harmony with one's integrated self), and c) relatedness (the will to interact with, be connected to, and experience caring) (Deci, 1975). If competence is defined as self-efficacy, then the basic need for competence is the need of feeling knowledgeable about the environment in which one exists (White, 1959). In a structured organization, the need for competence is fostered by offering constructive feedback and showing organized progress through activities or projects (Martin et al., 2018). Autonomy can be viewed as the psychological need to experience the ownership of one's actions (Chirkov, 2009). Therefore, true autonomy exists only when there is no control over individual actions in a given environment. Although true autonomy is not often possible in academic or work settings, autonomy support was shown more conducive to continued learning and personal success (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005), as well as self-determined motivation (Filak & Pritchard, 2007). Meaning, the more control that is put upon an individual in an environment, the less the need for autonomy is being met. When translated to an educational environment, autonomy can be supported through a self-paced environment with limited reward contingencies for participating (Martin et al., 2018). Relatedness directly corresponds with the need to feel like a part of one's environment which relates to the innate human need for survival with others (van den Broeck et al., 2016). However, that need of relatedness does not require others to be physically present to be fulfilled and support motivation (Martin et al., 2018). Encouragement to participate or acknowledgement of involvement, even after the fact, can fulfill the need of relatedness.

The lack of fulfillment of those three basic psychological needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—will result in a decrease in the overall well-being of the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and reduce the likelihood of further participation in the organization (Filak & Pritchard, 2007; Fisher et al., 2020). Alternatively, when an organization aids in fulfillment of these basic needs, participants tend to see an increase in well-being that is then reflected in increased motivations to succeed and continue personal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan & Deci (2000) found that conditions which enhanced perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness positively affected self-determined motivation and sense of competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci et al., 1994). That is of significance for individuals who seek to motivate others in a way that gives way to vested interest, commitment, effort, and high-quality performance, much like pre-professional organizations would do (Deci et al., 2017). SDT argues that needs are innate but can be developed in a social context, much in the way student organizations integrate peer mentoring in a social context (Fisher et al., 2020).

Some people develop stronger needs than others, creating individual differences (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, individual differences within the theory focus on concepts resulting from the degree to which needs have been satisfied or not satisfied (Pritchard et al., 1977). When participants experience growth, so does the organization. When the needs of the participants are fulfilled, the organization can then consider its own needs. Finally, of chief concern to SDT is the well-being of the individuals within the systems in which they participate. If the context in which participants are engaged in/with are responsive to those needs and provide the appropriate organizational structure in which participants can ascend without excessive control. Motivation and enhanced performance are what SDT would predict as participant engagement that can be sustained as a result (Kohn, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

While the body of knowledge in public relations pedagogy addresses unique challenges and innovations in online learning, that research does not address the complexity of a student organization such as PRSSA. PRSSA is more than a supplement to classroom learning. It is an experiential learning lab that provides student leaders with valuable organizational management skills at the university, regional, and international levels. This study adds to the existing literature by exploring issues of online organization management, through the lens of SDT, by exploring the following questions:

RQ1: What were the common chapter management practices of PRSSA chapters during COVID-19?

RQ2a: How do the common concerns of PRSSA e-board members regarding online programming affect perceptions of competency in chapter management?

RQ2b: What resources or tools are desired by PRSSA e-board members to facilitate perceptions of autonomy in chapter management?

RQ2c: What resources or tools are desired by PRSSA e-board members to foster relatedness with other organizations?

Method

This study used an online questionnaire distributed to PRSSA executive board members who served in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 and Fall semester of the 2020-2021 academic years. Surveys have been previously used to study the perceptions of PRSSA members in realms of public relations curricula (Sparks & Conwell, 1998; Todd, 2009) and self-efficacy in public relations practice (Ranta et al., 2020). The timeline of this study began in the last half of August and ended in late September of 2020. Questions were asked in a way to capture data from respondents' actual and anticipated policies regarding online classes and management of PRSSA chapters. The questionnaire was developed using Qualtrics software and distributed via a) emails to PRSSA faculty advisers and chapter presidents, b) private Facebook groups where faculty advisers were likely to be members, and c) social media posts that were directed to faculty advisers and PRSSA e-board members. Questionnaire protocols were approved by the respective institutional review boards of the authors.

Study Population

The authors initially made a request with the PRSSA national office for a contact list of current PRSSA board members, but the request was denied due to proprietary rights. Next, the authors reviewed the

PRSSA national chapter directory, which is publicly available through the PRSSA national website. Individual chapters are responsible for maintaining their directory listing, though it was unknown whether the contact information was current and accurate as no information was included with the chapter listing that indicated when it was last updated. While the PRSSA National Chapter Handbook (PRSSA, 2019) recommends a minimum of six executive board positions — president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, public relations director, and historian — the individual listing for PRSSA chapters from the national chapter directory often did not include contact information for all students who held those roles. In addition, it is unknown whether all PRSSA chapter e-boards included all positions recommended by the PRSSA national chapter handbook or if individual chapters had more e-board positions than were recommended.

Due to the above limitations, the authors developed an internal contact database of faculty advisers and chapter presidents, which were commonly included in the national directory listings for individual chapters. When faculty adviser and/or chapter president information was not available in the PRSSA chapter directory, the authors searched PRSSA chapter websites, chapter social media channels, and direct phone calls were made to university schools/departments that hosted PRSSA chapters. In total, 381 faculty advisers and 302 chapter presidents were identified at 370 U.S. university PRSSA chapters. Participants were recruited for the questionnaire through four distinct recruitment tactics implemented in August and September of 2020. First, the researchers sent two rounds of email invitations to PRSSA faculty advisers to share with their Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 e-board members. Second, the researchers sent an email invitation to PRSSA chapter presidents to share with their e-boards. Third, questionnaire invitations were posted on private Facebook groups such as PRSA Educators Academy, Student-Run Agency Advisers, and

Faculty Advisers for PRSSA Chapters. In addition, researchers used directed tweets to promote the survey using the hashtag #PRSSA and tags for the accounts of PRSSA National, PRSA Educators Academy, and the AEJMC Public Relations Division. Finally, an email invitation was sent by the PRSSA national office to chapter presidents, and study promotion tweets were shared by the @PRSSANational account.

A qualifying question at the beginning of the questionnaire asked participants if they were an e-board member of their local PRSSA chapter in Spring 2020 or Fall 2020. In total, 208 respondents indicated they were a PRSSA e-board member. Those board members represented at least 69 PRSSA chapters located in all U.S. districts of PRSSA, for a response rate of 18.6% within chapters. As the authors were unable to access information that could determine the actual size of e-boards for all 370 U.S. university PRSSA chapters, an accurate response rate for the total population of e-board members could not be calculated.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire included 40 items that measured five categories of information: a) general chapter information, b) completed and anticipated chapter programming practices for Spring and Fall 2020, c) areas of concern for PRSSA online programming, and d) resources used or desired for effective management of PRSSA online programming. Questions were developed with input from PRSSA faculty advisers who shared chapter management challenges that developed after many university campuses went to an online-only format during the Spring 2020 semester. No identifying information was collected, though respondents could opt-in for a $50 Amazon gift card drawing through a separate link using their university email addresses.

Online PRSSA Programming During COVID-19

Multiple-choice questions covered topics related to PRSSA chapter programming for Spring and Fall 2020 terms including: a) the quantity of Spring 2020 programming compared to Fall 2019, b) types of PRSSA online programming completed in Spring 2020 and planned to produce for Fall 2020. In addition, a unique question was added for the Spring 2020 e-board members to reflect on their PRSSA chapter's effectiveness of online programming by providing a letter grade assessment.

Areas of Concern for Online PRSSA Programming

Participants identified up to 10 chapter management areas in which the respondent would want more resources and/or training. Three Likert scale questions asked the respondent's level of confidence in meeting common chapter goals. Eight open-ended questions gained further insights about the respondent's perception of how online programming would impact various aspects of PRSSA chapter management. Open-ended questions were surveyed for recurring key terms that were ranked by frequency of use.

Desired Resources for PRSSA Online Programming

Five Likert-scale questions assessed respondents' level of agreement with statements related to how specific individuals or organizations—faculty adviser, university offices, school or department offices, PRSSA national leadership, and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) sponsor chapter—understood what their PRSSA chapter needed to successfully implement online programs. Three open-ended questions asked what support services the respondent's PRSSA chapter needed from a) their university, b) their faculty and professional advisers, and c) PRSSA national leadership. Open-ended questions were surveyed for recurring related key terms that were ranked by frequency of use. For example, the key term "Zoom burnout" also included "Zoom fatigue," which was classified under the umbrella term of "Zoom burnout."

Results

Respondent Demographics

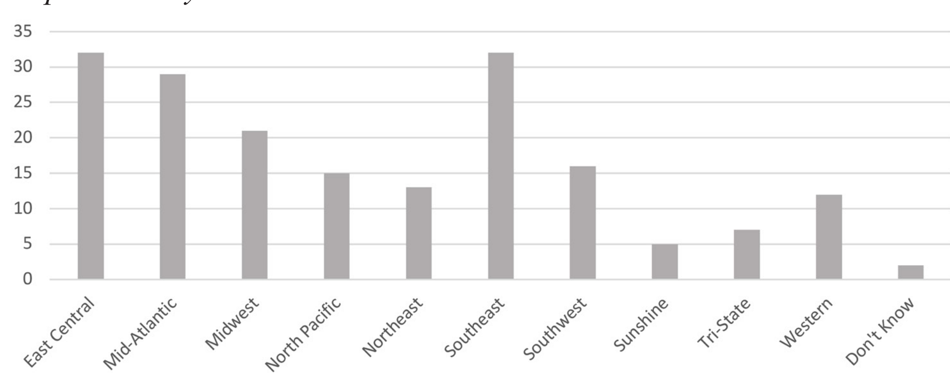
The vast majority of the study population identified as female at

80.3% (*n* = 171), 8.0% (*n* = 17) identified as male, and the remaining 11.7% (*n* = 25) declined to answer. Of the respondents, 128 identified as e-board members in Spring 2020 and 156 in Fall 2020. Respondents represented Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 e-board positions which were noted as required in the PRSSA Chapter Handbook (PRSSA, 2020) including presidents at 33.8% (*n* = 96), vice presidents at 13.0% (*n* = 37), secretaries at 3.9% (*n* = 11), treasurers at 5.3% (*n* = 22), PR directors at 8.5% (*n* = 24), and one historian. The remaining respondents represented other board positions that were unique to individual chapters but included leadership roles related to membership, events, and communication. Twenty-three respondents declined to provide their e-board position for Spring 2020, and 42 respondents declined for Fall 2020. Respondents included recent graduates and e-board members whose roles might have changed from Spring to Fall of 2020.

At the chapter level, 184 respondents identified the size of their PRSSA chapter, with 22.8% (*n* = 42) representing micro-chapters of one to nine members, 48.4% (*n* = 89) for small chapters of 10 to 49 members, 15.8% (*n* = 29) for mid-size chapters of 50-99 members and the remaining 13.0% (*n* = 24) represented large chapters of more than 100 members. Respondents represented all ten (PRSA U.S. districts (PRSA, n.d.) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Respondents by PRSA District



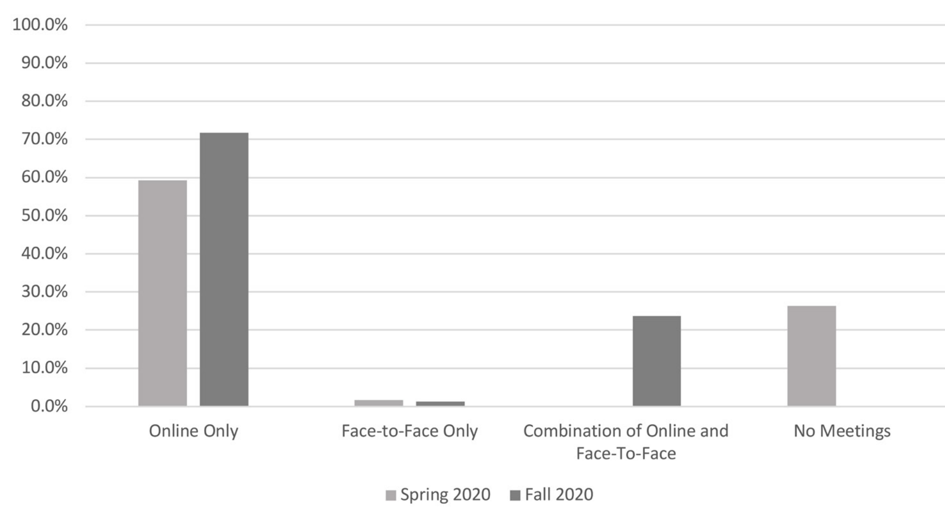
PRSSA Online Programming Trends During COVID-19

Adoption of Online Modality

Among PRSSA e-board members for Spring 2020 (*n* = 128), 92.2% (*n* = 11) indicated that their university moved to an online-only format, 7.8% (*n* = 10) remained with a face-to-face campus. Among PRSSA e-board members in Fall 2020 (*n* = 156), 39.8% (*n* = 62) indicated that their university classes were, or were scheduled to be, online-only for some of the fall term, while 30.2% (*n* = 47) would be face-to-face for all the fall term, and 23.7% (*n* = 37) would be online-only for all of the fall term. In a twist, 3.8% (*n* = 6) began the fall term as face-to-face but had to shift to online-only due to COVID-19 surges in their geographic region after the term began. Fifty respondents (32.0%) declined to answer the question, which might be related to the uncertainty of campus openings at the time the survey was administered (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Modality of PRSSA Chapter Management between Spring and Fall 2020 Terms



The modality of university classes did not mirror an alignment with PRSSA chapter modality. While survey responses indicated a reduction of online-only campuses from Spring to Fall 2020, the quantity of respondents who indicated their PRSSA chapter would be online-only increased from 59.3% in spring to 70.0% in fall. Respondents who indicated their chapter would host only face-to-face meetings remained consistently small at less than 2.0% of responses. There was a dramatic increase in a combination of online and face-to-face programming from less than 1.0% in Spring 2020 to 23.7% in Fall 2020.

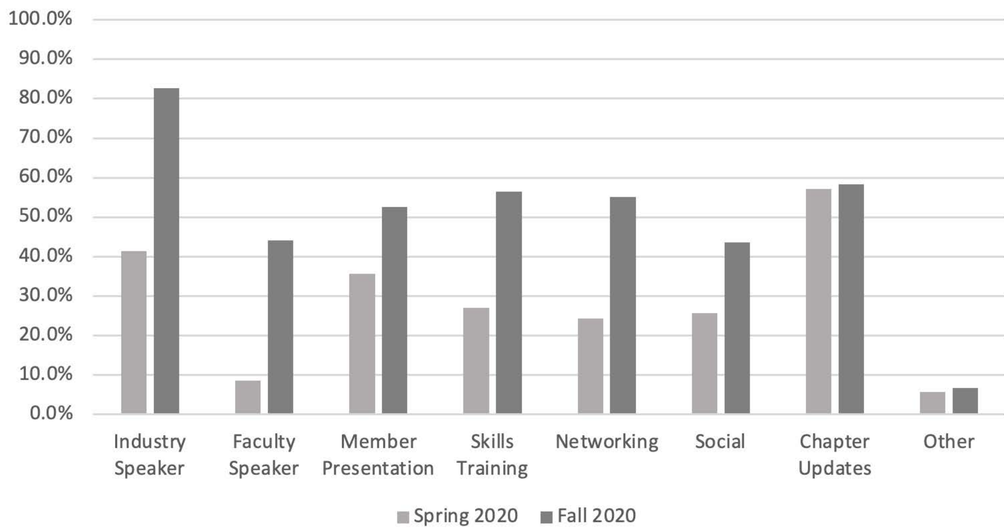
Chapter Programming

Content. When comparing the frequency of meetings for chapters that moved online in Spring 2020 to the previous fall semester, 91.4% (*n* = 57) of respondents indicated the chapter had less programming, with 40.0% (*n* = 28) reporting significantly less programs in Spring 2020 over fall 2019. For respondents whose chapters produced online programs in Spring 2020, chapter updates were most frequent (*n* = 40), followed by industry guest speakers (*n* = 29), and member presentations (*n* = 25). In Fall 2020, respondents indicated their chapter was likely to produce a variety of programming including industry guest speakers (*n* = 129), chapter updates (*n* = 91), skills training (*n* = 88), networking events (*n* = 86), member-led presentations (*n* = 82), faculty guest speakers (*n* = 69), and social events (*n* = 68). Thirteen respondents (8.3%) indicated other types of programming including collaborative events with other PRSSA chapters (*n* = 4), podcasts (*n* = 2), fundraising events (*n* = 2), and client projects (*n* = 2). Ten respondents (6.4%) did not know what types of online programming their chapter was planning (see Figure 3).

Communication applications. By far, the most common online application used for PRSSA online programming in both Spring and Fall 2020 was Zoom. In Fall 2020, responses indicated an increased use of other communication applications including GroupMe, Slack, Instagram video, and Twitter chats (see Figure 4).

Figure 3

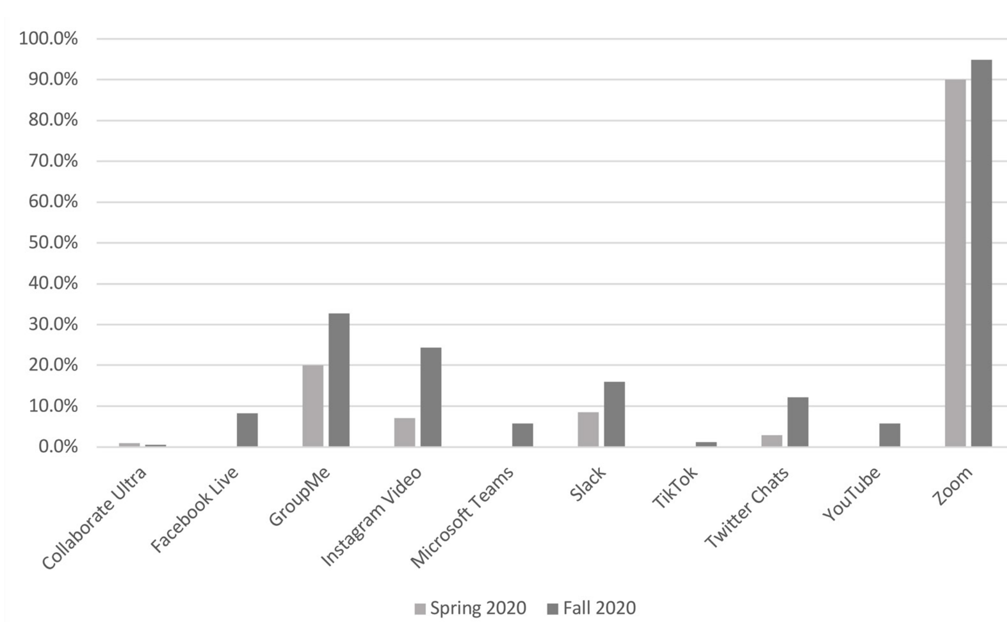
Comparison of PRSSA Online Programming Between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020



Perceived Competency in PRSSA Online Chapter Management

Figure 4

Online Communication Applications Used by PRSSA Chapters Between Spring and Fall 2020



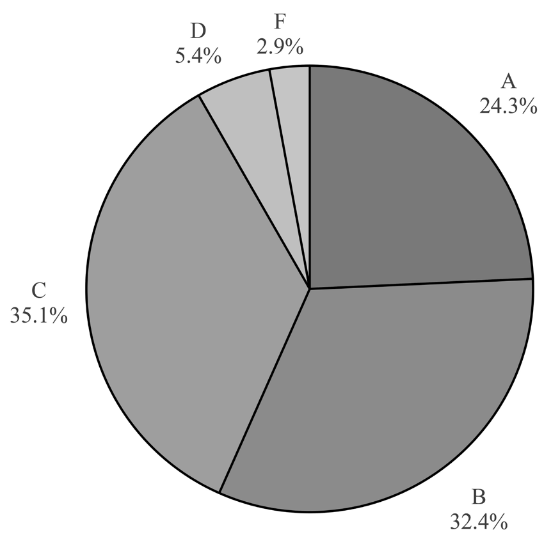
Respondents whose chapters continued to meet after their university went to an online-only format in Spring 2020 (*n* = 72) were asked what letter grade they would give their chapter's online programming. The greatest percentage of respondents gave their chapter a "C" (*n* = 26), followed by a "B" (*n* = 24). "A" (*n* = 18), "D," (*n* = 4) and "F," and 7.1% (*n* = 1) (see Figure 5).

Production of Online Programming

Moving to Fall 2020, respondents answered a Likert scale item

Figure 5

What grade would you give your PRSSA chapter for its online programs in Spring 2020?



that indicated their level of confidence (from 1 = very unconfident to 5 = very confident) in producing PRSSA online programming. Respondents expressed confidence (*M* = 4.21, *SD* = .963) in producing online programming, which was further supported by the reports that their PRSSA chapters were planning a wider variety of programs for the Fall 2020 than in the previous spring. Yet, responses to additional questions about Fall 2020 PRSSA chapter management revealed common concerns.

Membership

PRSSA e-board members in Fall 2020 expressed multiple concerns about online chapter management. Respondents (n = 148) were asked to rate their level of confidence (from 1 = very unconfident to 5 = very confident) in their chapter's ability to renew existing dues-paid members and recruit new dues-paid members. Respondents expressed the least confidence in recruiting new PRSSA members in Fall 2020 (M = 3.33, SD = 1.227) but slightly increased confidence in renewing existing members (M = 3.54, SD = 1.128). A one-way ANOVA found no significant difference between the size of the respondent's PRSSA chapter and level of confidence in recruiting new or renewing existing members.

A small positive correlation was found between chapter size and the respondent's confidence level in producing online programs, $r(147)$ = .199, $p < .05$, as well as the ability to renew existing dues-paid members, $r(147)$ = .175, $p < .05$. A large positive correlation was found between the respondent's confidence in their chapter's ability to produce online programs and recruiting new members, $r(147)$ = .565, $p < .001$, and renewing existing members, $r(147)$ = .599, $p < .001$ (see Table 1).

Perception of how Online Programming Helps or Hurts PRSSA Chapters

A series of open-ended questions asked respondents who were Fall 2020 PRSSA e-board members whether they felt online programming would only help, only hurt, or a combination of help and hurt, their chapter in: a) new member recruitment, b) member retention, c) chapter engagement, and d) scheduling of guest speakers.

Membership. Regarding recruiting new members, of the total respondents (n = 150) most (n = 84) felt that online programming would only hurt recruitment of new members. In terms of retaining existing

Table 1

Correlations between Chapter Size, Confidence in Producing Online Programming, and Ability to Recruit/Renew Members

		How many dues-paid members currently belong to your PRSSA Chapter?	How confident are you in your PRSSA chapters' ability to produce online programming?	How confident are you in your PRSSA chapters' ability to renew existing members in Fall 2020?	How confident are you in your PRSSA chapters' ability to recruit new members in Fall 2020?
How many dues-paid members currently belong to your PRSSA Chapter?	Pearson Correlation	1	.199**	.175*	.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.016	.033	.055
	N	148	148	148	148
How confident are you in your PRSSA chapters' ability to produce online programming?	Pearson Correlation	.199**	1	.599**	.565**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016		.000	.000
	N	148	148	148	148
How confident are you in your PRSSA chapters' ability to renew existing members in Fall 2020?	Pearson Correlation	.175*	.599**	1	.710**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.000		.000
	N	148	148	148	148
How confident are you in your PRSSA chapters' ability to recruit new members in Fall 2020?	Pearson Correlation	.158	.565**	.710**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.000	.000	
	N	148	148	148	148

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

PRSSA members, respondents (n = 116) were nearly split between those who felt that online programming would help membership retention (n

= 52) and those who felt online programming would only hurt retention (*n* = 48). Convenience of attending online programming was the most identified benefit to help retention (*n* = 12) and “Zoom burnout” was the most identified limitation to hurt retention (*n* = 9).

Dues Value. Of respondents (*n* = 134) who answered an open-ended question that addressed whether they believed online programming would affect the perception of dues value, more than two-thirds indicated a negative impact of the perceived value of the dues cost among PRSSA members, even though 12.7% (*n* = 17) of respondents noted their chapter members would receive a dues discount either for PRSSA national dues and/or local chapter dues. Common issues respondents noted that would negatively impact the perception of dues values were the lack of in-person programming (*n* = 31) and unique financial hardships students experienced due to COVID-19 (*n* = 5).

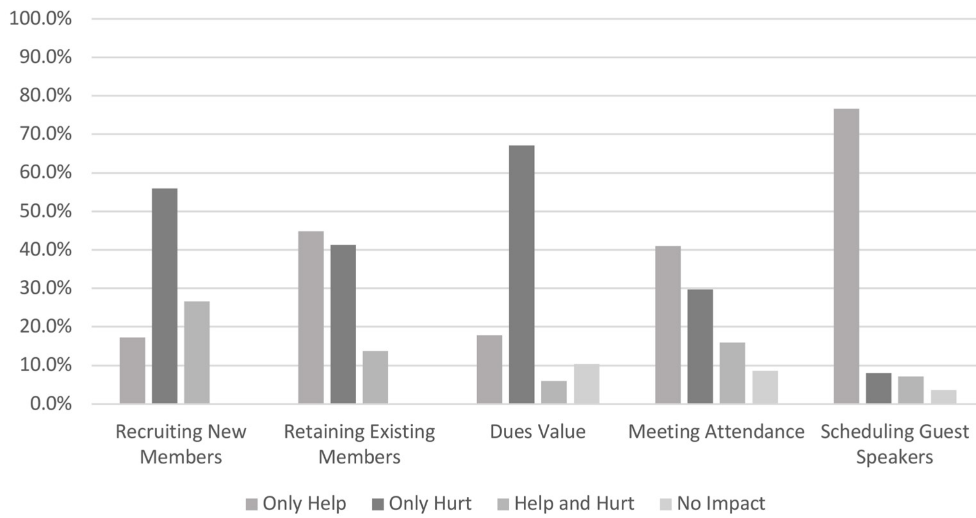
Meeting Attendance. Respondents (*n* = 151) answered an open-ended question about whether they felt online programming would help or hurt meeting attendance. Of the total respondents (*n* = 151) to the open-ended question, the greatest number (*n* = 62) felt online programming would only help meeting attendance, but others (*n* = 45) only felt online programming would hurt. As with dues value, respondents most commonly noted convenience as a benefit for online meeting attendance (*n* = 34) along with the ability to record meetings for asynchronous viewing (*n* = 18). “Zoom burnout” was also repeated as a limitation that could hurt meeting attendance (*n* = 18).

Scheduling Guest Speakers. Of the respondents (*n* = 145) who answered an open-ended question about whether online programming would help or hurt scheduling guest speakers, more than three-quarters of respondents (*n* = 111) felt it would help, with lack of travel requirements for speakers being the greatest benefit (*n* = 66). Only a handful of respondents (*n* = 9) indicated that online programming would hurt their chapter's ability to schedule guest speakers (see Figure 6).

What Online Programming Resources Do PRSSA Chapters Need to Achieve Autonomy?

Figure 6

Perceptions of Whether Online Programming Helps or Hurts PRSSA Chapter Management



Respondents were asked to identify specific online programming training or resources they wanted. Respondents (n = 149) most commonly identified membership recruitment and retention resources (n = 110), followed by collaboration with other PRSSA chapters (n = 81), and fundraising (n = 70) (see Figure 7).

A one-way ANOVA found a significant difference between chapter size and the need for training or resources related to scheduling guest speakers [F(6,148) = 2.442, p = .029]. Among the various chapter sizes, 36.8% (n = 50) of respondents from chapters with less than 100 members (n = 138) indicated they desired that training, while only 10.5% (n = 2) of respondents from chapters with 100 or more members (n = 19) requested the same. It is important to note that respondents of chapters with 10-19 members ($n = 30$) expressed the greatest need for that training at 53.3% ($n = 16$). No significant difference was found between the board position respondents held and the type of online training or resources which were desired.

There was a moderate negative correlation between chapter size and the need for assistance in scheduling guest speakers, $r(154) = -.183$, $p < .001$. Further analysis was conducted to determine if receiving assistance from specific individuals or organizations correlated with a desire for specific types of training or resources. Positive correlations were found between the chapter receiving online programming assistance from the faculty adviser, $r(148) = .197$, $p < .05$, professional adviser, $r(148) = .224$, $p < .001$, and desire for more information about membership recruitment/retention. Assistance from PRSSA chapters at different universities was positively correlated with the desire for more information about membership recruitment/retention, $r(148) = .186$, $p < .05$, communication with chapter members, $r(148) = .166$, $p < .05$, and service projects, $r(148) = .181$, $p < .05$. Assistance from university offices was positively correlated with the desire for more information about collaborating with PRSSA chapters at different universities, $r(148) = .169$, $p < .05$.

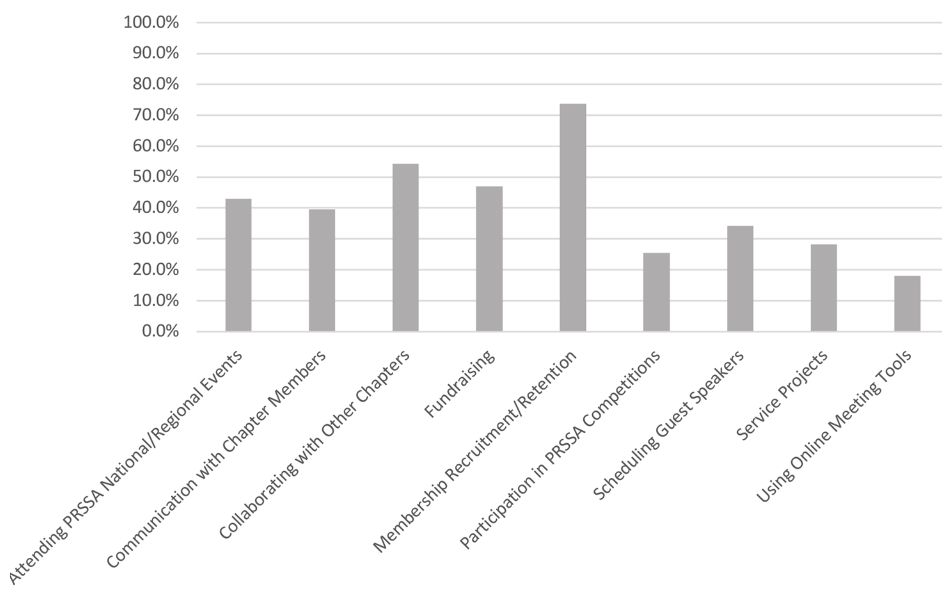
Open-ended questions continued the explorations of what online training or resources respondents wanted. Three questions asked what support services respondents needed to successfully produce online chapter programming from a) their university, b) PRSSA national leadership, and c) their faculty and/or professional advisers. From the university, respondents ($n = 132$) most needed a) the promotion of their chapter and its events ($n = 22$), b) technical support such as accessing online meeting tools or "stronger wifi access" ($n = 25$), and c) general support such as communication student organization offices, how to collaborate with other organizations, and encouragement from faculty ($n = 39$). From PRSSA national leadership, respondents ($n = 122$) most needed a) meeting planning support such as a content library and national speakers directory (*n* = 13), b) training for online chapter management such as webinars and best practices from other chapters (*n* = 36), c) communication such as individual chapter check-ins, a calendar of upcoming national events, and general chapter information (*n* = 39). From faculty and/or professional advisers, respondents (*n* = 122) most commonly indicated that they were satisfied with their adviser's support (*n* = 35), but others identified specific items such as general support like encouragement and advocating for the chapter (*n* = 31), assistance with scheduling guest speakers (*n* = 28), and tips for building member engagement in an online environment (*n* = 7).

Relatedness with Chapter Support Resources

When examining which organizations or individuals that

Figure 7

Online Training or Resources that PRSSA E-board Members Want



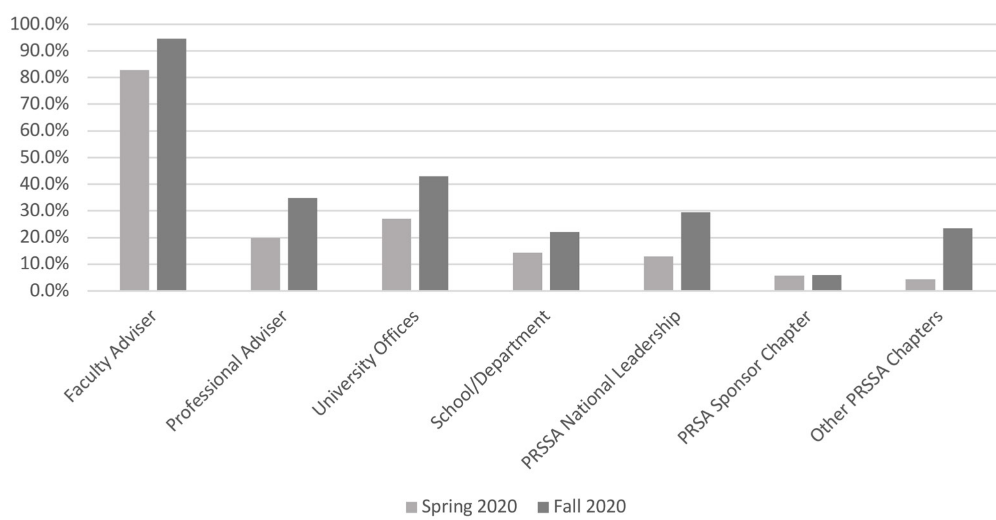
respondents identified as a chapter resource for online programming in

Spring (n = 137) and Fall 2020 (n = 141), faculty advisers were the most identified resource. While many chapters lacked guidance from other university resources such as university offices (student affairs, student government, or student organization offices) or school/department offices in Spring 2020, there were small improvements in those resources providing guidance to PRSSA chapters in Fall 2020. Organizational resources such as professional advisors, PRSSA national leadership, and PRSA sponsor chapters were identified by slightly more respondents for Fall 2020, but those remained unidentified by at least two-thirds of respondents. One organizational resource that gained a considerable increase in recognition was other PRSSA chapters, which grew from a resource identified by only 4.3% of respondents for Spring 2020, to 23.5% of respondents for Fall 2020 (see Figure 8).

Respondents were asked a series of Likert scale questions to indicate their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) with statements related to how specific individuals or organizations

Figure 8

Comparison of Individuals/Organizations that Provided Online Program Guidance Between Spring 2020 and Fall 2020



understood their chapter's needs in developing online programming. Respondents most strongly agreed that their faculty adviser understood the chapter's needs (M = 4.48, SD = 1.125), followed by PRSSA national leadership (M = 3.90, SD = 1.267), school or department offices (M = 3.72, SD = 1.262), PRSA sponsor chapters (M = 3.53, SD = 1.308), and university offices (M = 3.30, SD = 1.328). The large standard deviations indicated a mixed experience among respondents, which was further explored. A one-way MANOVA found no significant difference between the respondent's chapter size and the level of agreement that specific individuals or organizations understood their chapter's online programming needs. An additional one-way MANOVA found no significant difference between respondents' Fall 2020 e-board position and the level of agreement that specific individuals or organizations understood their chapter's online programming needs. There was a moderate correlation between respondents receiving assistance from their faculty adviser and their level of agreement that the adviser understood their chapter needs, $r(148) = .395$, $p <. 001$, but weaker correlations were found for university offices, $r(148) = .257$, $p < .001$, PRSSA national leadership, $r(148) = .203$, $p < .05$, and the PRSA sponsor chapter, $r(148) = .178$, $p < .05$. There was no correlation for the school/department. There were also moderate positive correlations between respondent's level of agreement that their faculty adviser understood what their chapter needed to successfully implement online programming and other organizations understanding the same needs (see Table 2).

A small positive correlation was found between chapter size and receiving online programming assistance from the school/department, $r(147) = .302$, $p < .001$, but no other correlations existed between chapter size and receiving assistance from other individuals or organizations.

Discussion

Moving from Reactive to Proactive Online Programming Practices

The results of this study found that most PRSSA chapters were ill-

Table 2

Correlations between Perceptions the Faculty Adviser and Other Resource Organizations Understood What the PRSSA Chapter Needs to Successfully Implement Online Programming

		My university office understands what our chapter needs to successfully implement online programming	My school or department office understands what our chapter needs to successfully implement online programming	PRSSA national leadership understands what our chapter needs to successfully implement online programming	Our PRSA sponsor chapter understands what our chapter needs to successfully implement online programming
My faculty advisor understands what our chapter needs to successfully implement online programming	Pearson Correlation	.523**	.591**	.550**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	156	156	156	156

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

equipped to handle the quick transition to an online-only modality. More than one-third of respondents noted their chapter did not meet after the university moved to an online-only modality. Of those chapters that did make a transition to online programming, more than 90% shared that they produced less programming in Spring 2020 in comparison to the previous Fall, and that programming was most often in the form of chapter news and updates rather than content related to the three pillars of PRSSA—enhancing education, building networks, and launching careers.

While the integration of online programming was initiated by most PRSSA chapters as a response to universities transitioning to online-only campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic, these practices hold long-term value to create more inclusive programming and identify new strategies that enhance member recruitment. The traditional tactics of in-person

PRSSA chapter programming and membership recruitment tactics limit outreach opportunities to students who fit a non-traditional mold such as online learners, continuing education students, commuters, and graduate students.

Through the application of Self-Determination Theory, which was previously applied to PRSSA management by Filak & Pritchard (2007), the authors identified how competence, autonomy, and relatedness are urgent needs that need to be addressed to support PRSSA e-board members through the uncharted territory of online program management. The following recommendations address the current needs of PRSSA chapters and provide a blueprint to elevate chapter practices that address the evolving nature of higher education and the public relations industry.

Enhance Competency

Respondents' self-assessment of their chapter's online programming for Spring 2020 revealed that more than two-thirds of respondents gave their chapter either a "C" (34.3%) or "B" (28.6%). Membership recruitment and retention were, by far, the most pressing concern of PRSSA e-board members. There was a concern regarding the recruitment of new members especially when student outreach opportunities, such as student fairs, were limited. Though slightly greater confidence was expressed in retaining existing members, qualitative responses indicated concerns about the lack of personal connection with members and fighting "Zoom fatigue." As a respondent shared,

> I think that in general, online programs will hurt recruiting and retaining of chapter members for students to really learn with a human touch face-to-face. Coming from my own experience, being at the chapter's events helped me network and talk with guest professionals to learn more of the secrets of the trade. I think with having online programs, the motivation from members won't be as enthusiastic about, says a Microsoft Teams meeting with an

> industry professional to attend.

In addition, respondents were also concerned about the dues cost, even when considering a limited-time 25% discount on national dues and some chapters reducing or eliminating their local dues. Another respondent stated,

> I think it's great that Nationals dropped the price, however, $41 is still a lot of money for a college student. That could pay for two weeks of groceries. So, with programs being all online and most other clubs waiving fees, I think it will be much more difficult to convince members that they will get their money's worth.

Concern was expressed that prospective members would not see the return on investment of their dues cost because many programs that were selling points of the organization—face-to-face networking, agency tours, attending national and/or regional events—were not an option for Fall 2020.

A negative perception of online programming was evident among respondents, especially in regard to new member recruitment and engagement. More than 56% of respondents felt that online programming would hurt new member recruitment, even though nearly 90% of respondents expressed confidence in their chapter's ability to produce online programming. Martin, Sun, & Westine (2020) suggest that perception might be linked to existing attitudes related to participation in online courses or feelings of anxiety related to uncertainty working within a new communication modality (Hilliard et al., 2020). A respondent shared,

> Online programs, in my experience so far, split a group into attentive vs uninterested members. The members who didn't pay as much attention or didn't get as involved as others are dropping away and the members who were working hard are continuing to grow. I'd say that this online format is really showing who is

serious about PRSSA and their profession.

PRSSA e-board members noted concern about limited opportunities to promote their chapters in an online environment. As opportunities for face-to-face connections—student organization fairs, "tabling," in-class presentations, or casual conversations—were noted by respondents as being reduced, or eliminated, it is crucial that PRSSA chapters receive assistance from faculty and administration to advocate for the organization with prospective students. As the results of this study found that there was a negative correlation between chapter size and whether the chapter received assistance from its school or department, it is essential that smaller chapters receive outreach assistance to promote PRSSA, especially among underclassmen. These results were reflected in a respondent's comment,

> In order to successfully produce online programs for my PRSSA chapter, we will need support services such as technology services, faculty help, and help from our school to reach out to as many students as possible.

Based on the feedback provided by PRSSA e-board members in this study, the authors make two recommendations to build competence in online chapter management. First, enhanced training is needed to address unique issues identified by respondents including a) member recruitment, b) fundraising, and c) service projects. Training initiatives can be made available as live webinars to solicit real-time questions from chapter leaders, but also should be recorded for on-demand viewing as needed. Primarily, training sessions should be produced by PRSSA national leadership as they are in the best position to understand the unique challenges and needs of chapters. Initiatives should be produced with the assistance and guidance of PRSA to ensure comprehensive and best practices are disseminated to PRSSA chapter leaders.

Second, PRSSA national leadership should engage in strategic partnerships with organizations that offer specialized training in online communication to make those resources available to chapter leaders. Organizational programs such as the HubSpot Education Partner Program (HubSpot, n.d.), Hootsuite Student Program (Hootsuite, n.d.), and Facebook Educators Portal (Facebook, n.d.) already produce student-oriented training modules and/support services related to online communication. Those resources could be linked on the PRSSA national website and promoted through chapter communication. Access to the resources provided by those organizations will provide resources for chapters to effectively plan, implement, and evaluate diverse online communication tactics that follow best practice standards.

Empower Autonomy

Self-Determination Theory defines autonomy as the psychological need to experience the ownership of one's actions (Chirkov, 2009). By providing access to additional tools and resources, PRSSA e-board members can take ownership of developing their own skills related to online program management, identifying relevant subject-matter experts in the field of public relations, and integrating pre-packaged content that best serves the members' educational and professional development needs.

PRSSA e-board members recognized the benefits of online programming in regard to meeting attendance. Respondents noted that online programming could help meeting attendance by offering a level of convenience for members who could participate live from home or watch meetings on their own schedule when the meetings are recorded, as a respondent shared,

> I hope that they increase the meeting attendance. Prior to going to an online format, I spoke to various members to find out what I can do to increase meeting attendance. A large majority of our dues paying members are commuter students who would not travel to school for the sole purpose of the meeting. I think the online

> programs will help with attendance along with the new format I plan to implement at meetings.

One concern was "Zoom fatigue" members might experience, especially when classes are taught solely in the online modality. This points to a greater need for training resources that will teach PRSSA board members about the best practices of online event planning that facilitate strong audience engagement.

Respondents were most enthusiastic about the opportunity to schedule guest speakers. Many noted the convenience for guests since they did not need to travel to campus and expressed optimism for improving their chapter's ability to schedule speakers in comparison to in-person meetings. Respondents were especially excited at the prospect of scheduling guest speakers from across the U.S. instead of focusing on recruiting guests who were within physical proximity to their university campus.

> We have had no problem scheduling speakers and have even had an easier time as we have been able to bring more speakers in from all over the industry as well as the country. The flexibility has increased speakers' willingness to agree to speak as well as the ease of simply hopping onto a Zoom call rather than necessarily having to travel to the school.

A small number of respondents did express concern with scheduling guest speakers because they would be too busy.

PRSSA national leadership should coordinate with PRSA to develop a nationwide PRSSA speakers directory that is available on a password-protected page of the PRSSA national website. Through collaboration with the PRSA national office, members may indicate their interest in new membership or renewal documentation as to whether they would like to be included in a PRSSA speakers directory. The directory can be a valuable resource for smaller PRSSA chapters, or chapters in rural locations, that might have difficulty with identifying appropriate guest speakers. If a PRSA member indicates interest in being added to a PRSSA speaker directory, a follow-up questionnaire can be distributed to collect additional information such as: a) what company the speaker works for, b) how long they have worked in the PR industry, c) what industry do they specialize in (i.e. healthcare, nonprofit, food/beverage), d) areas of expertise (i.e. crisis communication, media relations, diversity & inclusion), e) how the speaker would like to meet with chapters (i.e. online or in-person), and f) demographic questions to ensure a diverse representation of speakers. The speaker directory can be updated through an opt-in selection in the PRSA new member or membership renewal process.

In addition to assistance with scheduling guest speakers, PRSSA chapters, especially small chapters, need access to other programming content for member meetings. Pre-packaged content developed specifically for PRSSA members, such as interviews with industry professionals and skills training learning modules should be available on-demand in a digital library that is available on the PRSSA website. That will not only provide content for chapters that are struggling during COVID-19 but serve chapters well into the future to increase the perceived value of dues and, in turn, increase membership.

Foster Relatedness

Faculty advisers were consistent sources of guidance to PRSSA e-board members, as identified by nearly 83% of respondents for Spring 2020. In contrast, other organizations were far less consistent in providing support services to guide chapter leadership in developing online programs. University offices were identified by 27% of respondents and PRSSA national leadership trailed far further at less than 13%. A respondent shared,

I've been in PRSSA for seven semesters now. I was also the

> National Committee Liaison. I felt in all of the roles I've been in a lack of support from PRSSA National. Other than the national conference, we don't get opportunities to interact with National other than when we are constantly reaching out ourselves. I think the biggest way national can support us is getting in touch with us first and setting up monthly (if not weekly) check-ins.

This lack of organizational communication, from the university and PRSSA, likely limited access to valuable information and resources that would have allowed PRSSA chapter leaders to effectively and efficiently transition to an online format. PRSSA chapter e-board members also indicated a need for general support from their universities and PRSSA national leadership including: a) more information related to managing their chapter in an online format and b) regular check-ins by university faculty/staff and PRSSA national leadership to address any emerging needs and to provide much-needed encouragement.

PRSSA e-board members noted concern about limited opportunities to promote their chapters to the campus community in an online environment. During COVID-19, respondents commonly noted traditional means of new member outreach — student organization fairs, "tabling," in-class presentations, or casual conversations — as being reduced, or eliminated. As the results of this study found that there was a negative correlation between chapter size and whether the chapter received online programming assistance from its school or department, it is essential that smaller chapters receive online outreach assistance, especially among nontraditional or commuter students who might not be able to attend in-person events. That type of assistance holds potential to not only benefit increased membership in PRSSA, but to recruit prospective majors to the school or department.

Since more than 95% of respondents indicated their PRSSA chapter would continue with online programming in Fall 2020, it is critical that chapters receive consistent and comprehensive training resources to guide their program planning. Small improvements have been made by university offices and the PRSSA organization to enhance communication and training related to online programming for Fall 2020, but research results point to a continued need for stronger efforts from both organizations. At the time of this survey in the early part of the Fall 2020 term, only 43% of respondents stated they were receiving guidance from university offices, and PRSSA national leadership lagged further behind by only providing guidance to less than 30% of respondents. At the same time, the number of respondents who received guidance from other PRSSA chapters grew dramatically from 4.3% in Spring to 23.5% in Fall 2020, suggesting that chapter leaders were turning to each other as peer support for information and solutions when communication lacked from university and organization resources.

More than 50% of respondents indicated a desire to collaborate with PRSSA chapters at other universities, and nearly 25% had already reached out to other chapters during the Fall 2020 semester. Those respondents indicate a growing desire for inter-chapter networking and/or cross-chapter collaborations. Such initiatives build a productive network to share the load of programming and create a greater sense of community. Examples of those collaborations include PRSSA Reimagined, a partnership of six PRSSA chapters across the U.S. Each chapter committed to producing one event during Fall 2020 that was open to all PRSSA members. The Georgia PRSSA E-board Meetup, hosted by Kennesaw State University, invited chapter leaders to network and collaborate on finding solutions to common chapter issues related to online programming. Other PRSSA chapters, such as Ohio University, West Virginia University, and SUNY Oswego, opened guest speaker events to all PRSSA members. To further facilitate inter-chapter collaborations, PRSSA national leadership needs to ensure that the PRSSA chapter directory, available on the PRSSA national website, is up to date with current leaders and chapter contact information. As part of this study, the authors attempted to access PRSSA chapter e-board leaders through the chapter directory and discovered more than 30% of chapter listings were either outdated or incomplete. By educating chapter leaders and faculty advisers on how to update their chapter's directory listing, they can ensure their chapter information is current, correct, and complete. PRSSA chapters could indicate in their chapter directory listing whether they would like to collaborate with other PRSSA chapters.

Limitations and Directions for Future Study

This study provides a detailed snapshot of current PRSSA chapter management issues during COVID-19, but the situation remains in a state of flux and the long-term effects are yet to be known. While the authors were able to examine actual practices of online programs for the Spring 2020 term, only anticipated programming practices were collected for Fall 2020. In addition, there was a large percentage of female participants in this study. No demographic information could be found about the ratio of male, female, or nonbinary PRSSA executive board members to determine if the study sample was representative of the total population, though gender representation does appear to be reflective of the public relations industry (Dubrowski et al., 2019). To provide a broader picture of study results, future research will pursue a longitudinal perspective by conducting follow-up surveys of PRSSA e-board members as COVID-19 continues to impact universities to determine if current findings remain stable over time.

Conclusion

While the vision of a more collaborative PRSSA is aspirational, it is by no means impractical. The new strategies and tactics related to online programming that result from this study hold promise to strengthen the technological business aptitude of students, allow for increased networking and mentorship access to professionals from across the globe, and improve chapter recruitment and retention outcomes through diverse communication modalities and strategies.

During times of uncertainty, organizational management practices are put to the test. The cracks and flaws that have gone unnoticed in times of smooth sailing can no longer be ignored when navigating stormy seas. The research findings provide evidence that PRSSA national leadership, the PRSA organization, and university departments can seize the opportunities to address organizational challenges highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic response to pursue new training and support initiatives for PRSSA chapters. By embracing innovations, PRSSA chapters will emerge from the storm stronger and more resilient.

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Special Issue: The Unprecedented Upheaval of Public Relations Education

Thriving in "The New Normal": Student-Centered Practices, Design, and Tools of Hybrid and Online Learning Environments

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ABSTRACT

Online learning became our new normal over two weeks in Spring 2020 and remains a critical component for instruction at many institutions as the process of vaccination and return to campuses continues. The rapid shift brought technological integration, pedagogical shifts, and evolution in assessment. This left many educators and students overwhelmed, frustrated, and confused in the process. Originally presented in a panel as part of the 2021 AEJMC Public Relations Division's Virtual Conference, this team of educators in public relations and media production offer insights on online instructional design and share tools and resources valuable to public relations education used during the pandemic response, with applications beyond the pandemic. In addition to providing a review of several tools, this article will share perspective on managing diverse learning styles, content delivery for diverse platforms, ensuring accessibility for all learners, class engagement, and assessment, while providing some personal reflection on their experiences in offering traditional public relations offerings during the pandemic.

Keywords: online learning, pedagogical tools, accessibility, certifications, project-based learning

In the spring 2020 semester, public relations educators joined faculty around the world in migrating their courses totally online in two weeks or less, and were expected to deliver a high-quality course, even as this likely meant scrapping existing client partnerships, cancelling project deliverables, or fundamentally adapting them to accommodate the platform shift. Additionally, our approach to connecting with students to provide counsel in project development, building learning communities, and ensuring quality of outcome became severely limited by the quality of the technology and broadband of faculty and students alike. Finally, the socioemotional toll on both faculty and students alike has been a source of concern when determining methods of evaluation and making appropriate accommodations when accounting for those dealing with the various forms of trauma, we have all encountered in this time (Madden & Del Rosso, 2021; Scannell, 2020).

In addition to the pandemic's impact on the way we live and work, and the personal losses many of us have incurred due to its impact on public health and the economy, an election year, and the ongoing civil unrest over issues of race and class have permeated the public consciousness and found its way into classroom dialog around the country. These factors further complicate our challenges in making it all work as scholars, educators, and servants to our discipline and community. Not surprisingly, most of us have been asked to make these changes without institutional guidance or logistical support to execute the task at hand.

In February, we held a panel where we offered our perspectives, along with resources to help those who are still working to adapt to online and hybrid learning. The conversation was rich and opened some channels of dialog with peers across the discipline who are veterans and novices of distance learning alike. In the weeks that followed, the editorial team invited us to develop an article loosely based on the review structure commonly adopted by the Journal of Public Relations Education to provide insights on new or existing resources to faculty across the discipline. In addition to traditional considerations of software platforms and technologies in this piece, the authors are offering personal insights and perspective on specific practices common to teaching in our discipline and how we individually adapted our own practices to accommodate student needs.

The authors offer these topics and resources as examples of resources at your disposal, and to offer support to those who may still be struggling with adapted formats. That said, we know these tools and advice may prove valuable to educators who may be developing online courses in the discipline for the first time. In each case, each of us have a wealth of experience and are certified online course developers, so we consider ourselves fortunate to have been trained to manage this process well in advance of the crisis at hand. We know this edition of JPRE will provide some early assessment of the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning during the pandemic. Our intent is that this review and commentary on our own process of adapting to and accounting for elements specific to online learning and public relations pedagogy proves a valuable complementary resource, as well.

Online Recording/Presentation Delivery

Rafael "RC" Concepcion

One of the biggest challenges of the student experience in a pandemic classroom was maintaining a level of connection with the students and ensuring educational continuity. Teaching in an online environment requires the breakup of curricula into smaller digestible components (Bao, 2020) so it is important to ensure that you cover the educational material in a way that makes the most impact and has a measure of assessment tied into it.

Leveraging asynchronous content allowed for organization of material based on our “new need,” but also allowed the creation of online content that students could watch with whatever device they wanted to use (Islam et al., 2020). This afforded the opportunity to foster better student progress and address any learning gaps in online synchronous (live) sessions.

In developing asynchronous content, it was also important to consider students’ tendencies to watch content on mobile devices or in a second screen experience. Any content that is developed for this student experience would have to be tailored to these students’ viewing habits and attention needs. To reach them, a recorded PowerPoint lecture simply is not enough.

To develop asynchronous content, we used two software applications- Screenflow from Telestream for the Mac operating system and Camtasia for the PC operating system. This screen recording software allowed us to develop the presentations in a “two camera” setup - one camera being the WebCam and the second camera being the slide content or software being taught. Once completed, the recording was edited in the included software editors for each project.

Recording presentations in this manner allowed us to switch between the slide content and a host more frequently – helping keep student attention. Further - by addressing key topics on screen and switching back to a presenter to talk about the application of these key topics, the student is left with the impression that the asynchronous recording was planned to fit a larger developed component of the classroom and not just a replacement of a lecture that would have been done in-person were it not for COVID-19.

The professor would present the foundational concepts of a lesson in an asynchronous topic, leading to a series of questions that would serve as a formative assessment at the conclusion of the presentation. This allowed the professor to gauge how the students fared with the concepts before meeting for the live session.

During the live online session, the faculty member can steer the class facilitating discussion about the topic and provide his experience of the topics that were presented asynchronously. Using the synchronous time to connect, discuss, and share - you leverage the online medium to foster a "front row" to every student in the class and elevate connection in an environment where human connection was in short supply.

In using the Camtasia and Screenflow recording software to make the asynchronous content, we were able to pause, highlight, zoom, and call out specific portions of a lecture or demonstration. With students being more inclined to view content on their mobile device, most presentations that are designed for a laptop or desktop presentation will appear small in the mobile device. In addition to the student's inability to read or decipher content on that small of a video, the student is left with a feeling that the education they are receiving is not flexible enough to meet their needs and an after-the-fact experience.

By formatting the content with this extra level of production value, it demonstrates to students that the content is tailored for their medium and encourages mobile use. Encouraging them to use a second screen during presentations also prompts students to use their laptop or desktop devices to follow along and make notes - deepening the connection with the material.

Once the content was rendered, it was uploaded to the Kaltura Media Space or unlisted on the YouTube video platform for hosting. When uploading the video and setting the language, YouTube will generate captions for the presentations, streamlining the process.

Ensuring that the content is available for mobile platforms and varied to keep student attention would be incomplete without ensuring that the content was viewed and assessed. To help with this, the content would be linked using the Playposit Interactive video platform.

Playposit allows you to create a series of Bulbs - a combination of video links and organized questions for students to review. The Playposit bulbs allow you to create stop points in the video where questions can be asked on the topic that is presented. Playposit allows you to prevent the student from advancing ahead on the video without answering the questions - giving you greater control over the student experience.

As students interact with the Playposit bulbs, professors can monitor their progress using Playposit built in reporting. From here, professors can analyze how the content is being adopted in an asynchronous format and adjust the live sessions in response.

Online Recording Software Summary

Screenflow by Telestream

Strengths:

- Can record multiple monitors.
- Can record regions of a screen for tailored presentations.
- Can record iOS devices for use in presentations.
- Easy-to-use post production features.

Limitations:

- Cost (Check on your university's licensing agreements).
- Available on Mac only.

Camtasia by TechSmith

Strengths:

- Can record multiple monitors.
- Can record regions of a screen for tailored presentations.
- Can record iOS devices for use in presentations.
- Available for Mac and PC.

Limitations:

- Cost (Check on your university's licensing agreements).

- More of a learning curve than Screenflow.

Playposit

Strengths:

- Create Bulbs (videos plus interactive questions).
- Can prevent users from fast forwarding through video.
- Can control video playback speed.
- Great reporting controls to monitor progress.
- Incorporates into a variety of question types for the video.
- Can be organized and stored for re-use.

Limitations:

- Monthly cost ($12 USD) for instructors.

Demos:

Playposit – Creating and using Bulbs: http://rcweb.co/playpositdemo

Ensuring Accessibility of All Learning Abilities

Christopher J. McCollough, Ph.D.

In the past decade, to force compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, nonprofit organizations working on behalf of students with a wide spectrum of impairments are filing lawsuits against universities which fail to comply with web accessibility standards on the main Web sites and on course content delivery systems. A recent case involved the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University facing suit from the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) for failing to comply with provisions of the ADA when they failed to provide closed captioning on their entire catalog of instructional videos housed on online course pages (McKenzie, 2019). Other cases include matters of failure to optimize photos, videos, course pages, and slide presentations for learners who are dealing with visual impairment, hearing impairment, and color blindness, among others. In short, there is a growing movement to ensure Web content on university and college platforms are compliant to avoid being swept up with other institutions in a suit. Unfortunately, the movement to comply with these measures is an inconsistent priority across higher education. The rapid pace at which many of us had to migrate content online likely means many of us have done so with little attention paid to or support for ensuring compliance. As such, the author wanted to share some resources they use in course development. The author was introduced to these tools at a previous institution when serving as an accessibility champion for the university's Center for Online Learning. Using these tools have ensured my courses are ADA compliant.

WCAG is the Key to Compliance

To help educators comply, the Accessibility Guidelines Working Group (A3 WG) established the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Because our understanding of and best practices for supporting differently abled learners continues to evolve as medicine and science cultivates a sharper understanding of meeting needs, A3 WG maintains a living document approach to WCAG, and currently abides by what is called WCAG 2.2 (W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, 2021). Educators should review WCAG periodically to ensure they are accounting for updates to the guidelines that happen over time. As the organizations filing suits for failures in ADA compliance cite precedent from the WCAG standards, using these standards as a means of developing content and course presentation ensures compliance.

Identifying the WCAG Standards

The WCAG consists of four standards for the content developer to meet using a checklist, which includes subcategories that must be satisfied to meet the standards. The four standards are:

1. Perceivable - 11 components pertaining to visual and audio presentation that ensures learners coping with impairments have a clear means of accessing content logically.
2. Operable - 5 components pertaining to logical organization and clarity of function of headers, hyperlink destination descripts, and elimination of time limits and automations that may limit clarity of the content.
3. Understandable - 4 components pertaining to clarity of site navigation, sequence of the document, languages used, and guidelines for how one writes equations adherent to accessibility standards.
4. Robust - 1 component focusing on whether the author has provided thorough accessibility to third party tools and resources essential to course learning.

Resources to Support Educators in WCAG Compliance

Given the volume of expectations for educators in meeting these standards, the following offers public relations educators (and the larger community at your respective institutions) with a list of links to tools and resources to ensure ADA compliance. The first suggestion is to seek out your institution's support network for online learning to identify what resources they may house to support WCAG and ADA compliance online. One strong example is at my former institution's Online Course Accessibility Guidelines, which are put together by the Online Course Accessibility specialist Ann Newland. Look around to see what you may be able to draw on from your institution.

Absent of that, here is a comprehensive list of resources for educators who need tools to ensure development of WCAG compliant content:

- Breakdown of Standards by Subcategories
- Checklist Template for Inspecting WCAG

- Third Party Accessibility Policies List
- Accessible Microsoft Office Documents
- Accessible Microsoft PowerPoint Presentations
- Creating Accessible PDFs Using MS Word (WebAIM)
- Creating Accessible PowerPoints (WebAIM)
- Accessible PowerPoint Templates (Microsoft)
- Section 508 Comprehensive Guide for Creating Accessible PDFs

The following links provide accessible checkers for content developers to test each piece of course content prior to site launch:

- Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker
- Grackle Docs - Google Suite Accessibility Checker
- WebAIM WAVE Accessibility Checker Tool for Web Sites
- WebAIM Color Contrast Checker

Given the growing trend of filing suit to force compliance, adapting to WCAG now ensures not only that you are compliant, but that the content is easy to follow and facilitates learning for multiple styles of learning, especially important to pandemic pedagogy when students may not have their usual access to learning support. This only works to strengthen what we offer in the public relations classroom and provides the same quality of content for learners of different abilities.

Certifications, Simulations, and PBL Software

Jamie Ward, Ph.D.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), employment of public relations specialists is projected to grow seven percent from 2019 to 2029, faster than the average for all occupations. A key component for career success in PR today is both knowledge about, and experience with, digital marketing and communication. Student preparation requires classroom training along with applicable experiential learning activities. The use of digital certifications, simulation-based training and project-based learning can enhance student engagement and facilitate an educational environment where students become adept in the skills required for success in the public relations industry.

Digital certifications such as Google Analytics or Stukent's Digital Marketing Certificate have become a popular addition to many college and university courses in recent years and their applicability has only been heightened with the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Certifications can serve as an extension of the classroom, provide up-to-date training in areas that are constantly evolving, and add a level of innovation to course work. There has been little research conducted on the benefits of digital certifications within public relations curriculum. Therefore, research focusing on certifications and marketing courses has been utilized to highlight the curricular and professional benefits to students.

According to Professor Donald Bacon, "Keeping courses up-to-date with the latest theories may be less important than developing pedagogies that engage students, challenge their thinking, and inspire them to improve their communication and interpersonal skills" (Bacon, 2017, p. 121). Student success is heightened when professors not only endorse the content, but can also speak to the value of content and how it can be included in professional materials.

Cowley et al. (2021) found that faculty often select the digital certifications they offer in their courses based on recommendations and endorsements from industry professionals, professional advisory boards, or administrators. Faculty also develop assignments and craft curriculum to assist students in obtaining critical skills necessary for success in the job market (Madhavaram & Lavarie, 2010; Schlee & Karns, 2017).

Student acceptance and excitement over certifications is largely linked to the way the certifications are explained and integrated into the syllabus. An examination of student feedback from 2018-2021 in the author's fundamentals of social media course shows a correlation between the student's perceived value of digital certifications and the amount of time the professor has spent highlighting the skills that can be acquired through certification.

Based on student feedback, some best practices for incorporating certifications into public relations curriculum include:

- Make sure to get certified yourself before assigning certifications to students. This means watch all the videos and take the exams as if you were the student.
- Identify pain points, plan for questions, and incorporate that information into lectures.
- Remain the star. Certifications should supplement the knowledge that is already being presented in a classroom.
- Highlight the value in obtaining the certification so students are encouraged to work for their scores as opposed to simply looking for an answer key online.

Some of the most common certifications being used to supplement or enhance curriculum include:

- Courses in Hubspot Academy
- MuckRack Certifications
- Hootsuite
- Google Ads Certifications
- Google Analytics
- Twitter Flight School
- Social Media Analytics Course by Quintly

There is a myriad of different certifications available. A more comprehensive list can be located at https://digitalmarketingcompetition.com/.

In addition to certifications, simulation-based training has also shown significant value to educators. Public relations education is most effective when it bridges theory and practice with real world application (Gleason & Violette, 2012). Students need to understand how to apply what they are learning. Students who are confident in their understanding of public relations and in how to effectively counsel clients, will have a much easier time finding positions in the industry and to that matter, be far more effective in the industry than those who are unsure and question their skills. The more hands-on experiences educators can integrate into their course work, the more prepared the students become. There are two simulations, Mimic Public Relations and Mimic Social, both developed by Stukent, that are well suited to address the needs of both public relations professors and students.

Mimic Public Relations helps students gain experience and practice creating and targeting media pitches, writing press releases, creating targeted social media posts, developing content for crisis management, and reinforcing Associated Press Stylebook formatting. The content can integrate well into many introductory public relations and public relations writing courses. Asal and Blake (2006) claimed that "simulations, particularly human-to-human interactions, offer social science students the opportunity to learn from firsthand experience, and can be an important and useful addition to an educator's teaching repertoire" (p. 1).

Mimic Public Relations provides targeted training in public relations writing. Pitching is a unique activity, and pitches are developed based on the relationships with media - bloggers, editors, and reporters. This simulation, with its characters and archetypes, allows students to select different media – journalists, bloggers, etc. and learn the intricacies of working with each of them. The press release portion of the simulation takes a scaffolded approach. Students initially select content from set choices and then eventually build up to crafting content on their own. This allows students the opportunity to think content sequencing throughout the piece.

The Mimic Social simulation helps students obtain practical experience with formal and informal social media strategies. Students gain experience:

- Creating targeting ads on a variety of different social media platforms.
- Testing and adjusting their strategies. Students can engage with the simulation for a period of four to eight weeks, they have an opportunity to adjust their strategies, including days and time of posts, based on KPIs.
- Targeting influencers. This includes selecting influencers best suited for the brand and deciding how much compensation to offer for posts. The simulation is designed to have the influencers turn down insufficient offers. Most students do not get the opportunity to gain experience in this type of strategy before they graduate.
- Managing a budget. Students manage a $5,000 budget each week.

Educators can effectively guide students through these simulations while also assisting students in articulating their experiences and the value to potential employers. Many instructors have had great success implementing simulations and find simulations to be effective pedagogical tools (Dorn, 1989; Olson 2012, Shellman, 2001; Wang, 2017).

Project based learning models put students in the driver's seat and allow them to serve as public relations practitioners in a safe environment where they are encouraged to learn and make mistakes. The instructor provides guidelines in areas unfamiliar to students such as guidelines on copyright for photos or helping to develop strategies for engagement. The key to success here is for the instructor to give up some of their control and to let the students take the reins and implement what they have been taught. In public relations courses, project-based learning is often done by having students work with classroom clients.

Project based learning encourages students to think, speak, and act as competent public relations professionals. Project based learning allows students to identify with course concepts, find the course material relevant to real-life situations, and become more familiar with the theoretical course content and more confident in the application of that content in the classroom and beyond (McCollough, 2018).

Designing Capstone, Internships, and Projects for Online Learning
Adrienne A. Wallace, Ph.D.

Lucky for us, best practices for online learning began long before the COVID-19 pandemic flipped higher education topsy-turvy. For those who were already certified in online learning through our institutions, we had the advantage and likely found the transition smoother from an in-person to an online classroom. As an adjunct, the author took advantage of all the training and resources made available to me in this role as I thought it was more like a benefit offered to me than something I was required to do through the institution and as you know there are not many benefits afforded to adjunct faculty members.

Many scholars and practitioners have reported the positive outcomes of a flipped, or inverted, approach to instruction (Baker, 2000; Bates & Galloway, 2012; Lage et al., 2000; Lo & Hew, 2017; Pearson, 2012; Wright, 2011). Very few articles are published on the idea of flipped learning in public relations and even fewer on a flipped classroom online in public relations, but Enfield (2013) looked at this model for multimedia journalism courses. A researcher at the author's institution, Robert Talbert, has an active blog that the author began to engage with to help develop and maintain active classrooms.

Much later researcher H.O.U. Zhi-quiang (2018) published a conference paper which was a reflection on a public relations and tourism classroom that confirmed the author's experience, the quality of her own teaching, the quality of student input and prep was greatly improved with the flipped classroom idea. Other tools that helped the author inform my classroom and course design, were the books Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning (Brown, 2014), Beginners: The Joy and Transformative Power of Lifelong Learning (Vanderbilt, 2021), Out of Our Minds: The Power of Being Creative and The Element (Robinson, 2017, 2009), Creative Confidence (Kelley & Kelley, 2013), Outliers (Gladwell, 2008), The Culture Code (Coyle, 2018), Poke the Box: When Was the Last Time You Did Something for the First Time? and Linchpin: Are you Indispensable? (Godin, 2010, 2015). Finally, of course, the author can shoehorn anything by Brené Brown into a classroom to build confidence in new pros and have hooked many on her podcasts. While the author reads a lot of pedagogical material, she probably spends more time trying to transform the classroom through business acuity. It differentiates my classroom (online or offline) from others' and allows the author to really tap into the 22 years of experience she has in communication practice. She does not cater to a passive student experience. Students regularly acknowledge how much they like the "active" classroom and "crowdsourcing" conversations through starters from book chapters to podcasts and anything in between to keep learners active outside of "just" textbooks.

The author believes that a flipped classroom allowed me to seamlessly take her classes, with very few syllabus or schedule changes, online when COVID-19 struck, and our campus shut down. Students often mock the author's love of spreadsheets and project management, but they were the calm for many in the storm that was the end of that first COVID-19 semester. Like many colleges and university settings, the author was given very few days (two to be exact) to prepare my courses as we ventured online when our campus shut down. An unexpected bright side of taking a flipped course online was this is the exact way a student would operate in a professional environment with clients or work teams and so in my campaigns and capstone classes, The author was also showing students how to create workflows and best practices regarding time management, project management during our prep and class periods as well as how to better work in teams on large-scale projects remotely. So, the next transition, from college to a job during COVID-19 becomes much less of a stressful transition and more of a curious continuance into the working world.

While not all my experiments and assignments have worked out, the author has learned from each failure and side-step along the way in the spirit of continuous improvement. Here are a few things that have made transition from in-person campaigns courses and capstones easier:

1. **Adopt and embrace cool tech.** Utilize a project management system (PMS) and deploy it alongside your learning management system (LMS) at school. The author has used Asana, Trello, Monday, Airtable, and Basecamp over the last few years and I like Basecamp best in my classes. It seems to be the quickest to learn, their support is instant and amazing, and there is a great blog and rich video library for the students to learn tips on working remotely, team dynamics, group project tips, and project management tips of all kinds. The books It Doesn't Have to Be Crazy at Work and Rework (a New York Times Best Seller) are also must reads for anyone tackling large-scale projects, managing multiple teams, and remote work. There are drawbacks and bonuses to each system listed above. This is not a one-size-fits-all situation. You should practice with a few and be comfortable trouble shooting in the one that you pick. Basecamp has a free education program which also sweetened the deal for me as my institution does not have the budget for tools like this for just one professor.

2. **Reduce anxiety with instant exchanges.** Engage in the use of an instant message platform like Slack (or Google Hangouts/Chat) even if

your PMS has a chat feature for quick informal exchanges and to monitor group progress. Assign class-wide interest channels, team channels, and allow for direct messaging with your students. Slack uses a great mobile application the author finds far superior to Basecamp's app which includes "Campfire" as a messaging tool, but their mobile interface has been heckled by the author's students due to its poor functionality. So, the author works with her class to pick the best tools, based on their advantages and functionality. Slack is a crowd favorite, and students report they have used it at work, in internships, and in other classes to communicate with classmates and peers. Slack is much like Microsoft Teams chat which makes it nice to show how to communicate better virtually, but leaves room for students to feel confident learning any new platform for messaging as they progress through school and jobs.

Training for adaptability and platform-agnostic students to me is more important than specific platform training. When the author provides professionalism and support, the students will be able to hack any tool they encounter into submission. As an aside, the author knows this seems like a lot of accessibility to the professor, and maybe it is too much for everyone, but the author finds this "concierge-level" communication of higher quality between the students and herself as they can express something more easily that is maybe personal or professionally curious in a direct message or gain feedback from their classmates in a general channel on something like an assignment or an internship. These platforms can also allow the professor to eliminate issues before students stew on them, leading to decreased anxiety about small issues -- before they become bigger issues. This platform has allowed crowdsourcing help for students from other students when the author is delayed in responding to students. The author sets firm expectations about my accessibility to students. I realize this approach is not for everyone.

3. Introduce time management and distraction management early on. New tools bring increased accessibility of all involved. When the communication is easier the flow of information is faster and more frequent which introduces for some the feeling of being overwhelmed or stretched too thin. In every class taught, the author does exercises for speed researching and writing to demonstrate that three hours it took a student to write that 800-word blog post for your client, should and could be 45 minutes with time for a healthy edit experience. Using speed exercises in classes sans distractions does wake students up to the idea of less notifications is better for not just their writing life, but their whole life. The author performs a lot of tech support in class demonstrating how to mute notifications on phones and laptops for time blocks, how to use apps to our advantage with timers, or how to use calendar blocks to commit to a project for a while. Demonstrations are often followed up with a reward like a 20-minute walk or 15 minutes of TikTok. Whatever the case, there is a reward out there for everyone.

In the first day of class, which is full of onboarding activities and networking, we each access the "lifestyle" portion of our phone which unlocks how much time you have spent on apps that day, week, month, etc.; there are always gasps of horror in this newfound knowledge. Usually, students' progress through this discovery much like they experience other forms of grief. First in denial: I do not spend that much time on TikTok. Next, pain and guilt: I could be working on schoolwork or training for a marathon, but I am on TikTok? Then, anger and bargaining, masking the effects and beating down the resentment: Well, if TikTok were not so entertaining and if only I did not need to use it for work/internship/to keep up with friends then I would not have to use it. Next up depression: quiet emotions and the feeling of confusion about how they let social media get this far. Then finally, acceptance and hope: I am going to set limits and timers for my social media consumption and try to spend more time in self-care screenless activities.

This ultimately lays the groundwork for the idea of time block scheduling using a tool like Todoist, mind mapping, Design Thinking, process building, Pomodoro Technique, and use of Google calendar and to-do lists in Basecamp. This has led to the adoption of timekeeping apps on teams (to fill in time slips - just like "real life") like Toggl and Clockify. In general, discussions the author has with students are about how to best project manage oneself for better performance in all life activities, not just school and to avoid scheduling every moment of your day including your leisure time which can lead to burn out and dissatisfaction with your work (Tonietto & Malkoc, 2016; Malkoc & Tonietto, 2019).

4. Demonstrate how all the pieces support the whole. Students used to complain about "too many things to look at" until the author spent time during the first classes on a software demo about how everything works together to create the experience with the tools, along with a discussion on creating successful processes for improved organization and learning potential. Many classes have a Google Drive, an LMS, an PMS, a chat, and more. This can be confusing until you define the utility of each item, and as I mentioned earlier, "right size" the experience, meaning take the students through why choices were made in the first place and showing them how the decisions were made has since made for much less resistance in the space. The author has students suggest tools, and they pilot them in classes through mini-project briefs that we share with the class. Discovery then becomes part of the class norm. This doubles as job training as many times between client apps, files, and systems plus your own firm's apps, files, and systems, things can seem chaotic at first glance. Defining utility and improving understanding helps reduce anxiety about digital natives using new tools for professional projects.

Digital literacy is something the author strives to improve in every class; it is no secret that digital natives are not professionally digitally literate (Luttrell et al., 2020). The author uses radical transparency to show the behind-the-scenes operations so that students understand the author knows how to use these tools and can help them improve their skills too. The idea of “learning together” is something that makes the author feel vulnerable, but it has helped students get comfortable being uncomfortable. The class makes it work together.

5. Ditching perfection for utility. The author is not a video producer, a scriptwriter, or a podcast host. That is okay.

The author has long given up on the made-for-TV movie she thought she would be making, and instead am thriving in my gifts of imperfection (thanks Brene’ Brown). Flipped learning can mean a lot of content creation, but it does not have to mean the instructor has to create all the content. The author prefers to use videos of herself less, audio of herself more, and mix it together with industry pros, and great industry articles in a smorgasbord which is created for consumption each week. Over time, the author found this to be a “best practice” in several books and articles, at least until she took a direct hit through a student evaluation where they said there should only be instructor-made videos in the class, that the author was not working hard enough if they are watching, say the introduction video produced by Basecamp to serve as the tutorial for the platform. The list went on and on. The author wore this shame around my neck for assigning certification videos in my tech class and tutorials made by software companies to introduce things like our PMS or our Slack for our chat.

One day the author came to a realization: making content is not her job. Curating content IS her job. Translating and providing meaning and purpose to the content IS ALSO my job. So, she gave herself the deserved pass for those videos and carries on. She is not a tech company. She uses radical candor when introducing the videos. helps the student pull out the concepts of the prefab tools, and applies them together. The author advocates for the position that if you are putting your students through anything, and she means anything, whether it be Google certification to Slack tutorials to Hubspot social media training to Facebook Blueprint - you do the damn thing yourself and come back to the class and unpack it with the class. The experience and knowledge transfer should be led by you. It does not have to be made by you. How can you make them care if you do not? Make the time, do the prep.

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Research Article

How to CARE for PRSSA Faculty Advisers: The Impact of Competence, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Equity on Role Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

PRSSA faculty advisers play a critical role in public relations education by facilitating experiential learning and professional networking that connect classroom learning with the practical application of knowledge, skills, and understanding of the public relations industry. Yet, many faculty advisers feel overworked, misunderstood, under-appreciated in their role. A two-wave survey of current PRSSA faculty advisers examined the shared challenges that impact personal and professional satisfaction through the lens of Self-Determination Theory. Organizational recommendations provide new directions for national PRSSA programs that promote CARE for faculty advisers in the areas of competence, autonomy, relatedness, and equity.

Keywords: faculty adviser, student organization, tenure, promotion, pedagogy, equity, self-determination theory, Public Relations Student Society of America, PRSSA

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Undergraduate public relations students benefit from direct professional networking and industry introduction. One way to provide this industry exposure is via pre-professional societies such as the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). PRSSA supplements the traditional public relations curriculum by providing student members with enhanced learning and networking opportunities. Faculty advisers of PRSSA assume an advanced teaching and mentoring role in this organization by connecting students with unique experiences that link classroom learning to practical application of knowledge and skills in the public relations industry.

As the Commission on Public Relations Education's 2018 report on public relations education noted, pre-professional organizations "prepare students for their careers by providing an introduction to and understanding of the profession, as well as offering experiential learning and networking with other practitioners (p.133). Membership in university pre-professional organizations have been studied as critical links between classroom instruction and entry into the profession (Pohl & Butler, 1994), and department and faculty support of those organizations is directly related to the beneficial outcomes to students (Nadler, 1997).

Faculty advising duties of student organizations can vary among different organizations and/or campuses, a university-level disconnect might emerge between the service expectations of PRSSA advisers versus other student organizations such as a department honor society. Administrators often lump all student organization service efforts into similar labor expectations (Nadler, 1997). However, PRSSA is often a more labor-intensive service load than other organizations, an issue of which administrators and tenure committees are often unaware (Waymer, 2014). Faculty must sometimes choose between time-consuming efforts of sustaining a PRSSA chapter or engaging in teaching or research activities that hold greater weight in the tenure-and-promotion process.

While some PRSSA faculty advisers do receive strong support from university administration, other advisers are faced with a hard choice between chapter success or career success. This research addresses the lived experiences of the PRSSA faculty adviser, investigates the gap in knowledge surrounding advising perspectives, and seeks to draw awareness to the key issues that impact the personal and professional satisfaction of PRSSA faculty advisers.

Literature Review

PRSSA and Benefits of Pre-Professional Association Membership

Started as an affiliate organization of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) in 1967, PRSSA now has 370 chapters internationally located at universities of all sizes. PRSSA exists to support students studying the field of public relations and communication and reports a membership of more than 10,000 students and advisors throughout the United States and its territories, as well as in Argentina, Columbia, and Peru (PRSSA, n.d.-c). More than 375 faculty advisers, including co-advisers, now serve university PRSSA chapters.

The PRSSA national chapter handbook (PRSSA, n.d.-c) states that a faculty adviser must be "a full-time teacher of at least one of the public relations courses offered (p. 12)." The specific duties of a typical PRSSA faculty adviser are explained in the national chapter handbook in 11 articulated areas, which include mentorship, liaison duties to various constituencies, and communication duties (PRSSA, n.d.-c). However, specific day-to-day duties, such as writing PRSSA student scholarship recommendation letters, chapter communication, and clerical duties, are not articulated in the handbook.

PRSSA chapters organize activities on- and off-campus to satisfy the national chapter requirements and serve the interests of members (PRSSA, 2017). Many chapters focus on networking activities, experiential learning, and participation in PRSSA-sponsored awards programs (Andrews, 2007). Students may also attend PRSA professional meetings and attend regional PRSA conferences. Nationwide competitions, such as the Bateman Case Study Competition, are sponsored by the PRSSA national organization. PRSSA members benefit from professional networking, educational opportunities, resume building, and monetary awards from scholarships.

The PRSSA national office sponsors several types of chapter activities including community service, PRSA outreach, diversity and inclusion initiatives, national/regional event conferences, student-run firms, as well as scholarship and award competitions (PRSSA, n.d.-d). Participating in those activities can qualify chapters for awards such as PRSSA Star Chapter or the Dr. F. H. Teahan Chapter Awards Program. The PRSA Foundation offers educational and conference scholarships to members (PRSA Foundation, n.d.).

Previous PRSSA research has studied how satisfied students are with their PRSSA membership (Andrews, 2007), what students gain from membership (Pohl & Butler, 1994) and how PRSSA prepares students for careers in PR (Andrews, 2007; Sparks & Conwell, 1998). In a survey of students enrolled in PRSSA chapters in Ohio, Andrews (2007) found that PRSSA member students reported joining the organization to: 1) network, 2) build their resume, 3) learn career-related skills, and 4) gain hands-on experience.

Defining Faculty and Faculty Service

PRSSA requires faculty advisers to be full-time faculty members. The definition of a full-time faculty member varies, however, based on the type of contract under which a faculty member is hired. Tenure-track faculty often hold a Ph.D. and are expected to pursue an active research agenda. Professors-of-practice and non-tenure lecturers are often hired to capitalize on the industry knowledge that public relations executives bring to the classroom and allow an avenue for executives to transition to higher education. Prior research has identified public relations executive knowledge as a great benefit to students (Todd, 2009), both as tenure and non-tenure faculty.

Most full-time faculty must complete university service in addition to teaching and/or research. Carnegie-classified R1 universities generally place a strong emphasis on producing research and grant funding for tenure and tenure-track faculty, and service expectations are less robust than at more teaching-centric universities. As Boyer (1991) asserted, tenure-track faculty must often limit student-centric pursuits to meet research needs. Each university defines its own tenure guidelines, but research production often takes priority over service for tenure-track faculty at most universities. Non-tenured faculty may not have research requirements, and that is often supplemented through an increased teaching and/or service expectation.

Fostering Role Satisfaction through Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) explores the psychological motivations of organization members to work toward common goals. SDT has been applied in the context of student participation in university organizations (Filak & Sheldon, 2003) and faculty advisers' perceived performance in their role (Filak & Pritchard, 2007). At the core of SDT is the human desire to satisfy three psychological needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—to feel valued as a group member and commit individual efforts to group outcomes (Ryan et al., 1996). Competence represents the need to feel capable to effectively navigate the environment and make successful steps for improvement (Filak & Pritchard, 2007). In the context of PRSSA advising, competence might relate to issues of sufficient training, constructive feedback from peers, and positive support from department administration. Relatedness represents the need to feel connection with others who hold importance to the organization or task-at-hand (Ryan et al., 1995). Autonomy represents the need to function under personal power without the influence of external control (Deci & Ryan, 2013). PRSSA faculty advisers can perceive autonomy in a two-fold manner through the sense that a) they came to their role out of personal desire, and b) they have independence to advise the organization without unreasonable oversight. PRSSA faculty advisers are likely to feel relatedness to three distinct groups: a) members of the PRSSA chapter, b) peer faculty members, and c) department administration.

In addition to identifying need satisfaction, SDT also categorizes different types of motivations along a spectrum from extrinsic-to-intrinsic. As the least self-determined motivation, extrinsic motivations are those that satisfy needs from external sources, and are often not in line with the individual. Introjected motivation occurs when the individual accepts extrinsic motivation due to emotional influence exerted by an external source. Those emotional influences might come into play through the application of guilt ("we need you"), loyalty ("be a team player"), or status tactics ("pay your dues"). Introjected motivations do not necessarily increase commitment to tasks, but are effective through appealing to an individual's perception of relatedness with those who are in power positions. Identified motivation occurs when one values the outcomes of their actions but gains little enjoyment or fulfillment from the activity. For some PRSSA faculty advisers, identified motivation might come from the sense of engaging in an activity that is assessed for employment review but holds little personal interest. At the opposite end of the motivation spectrum is intrinsic motivation, in which the individual finds internal enjoyment and fulfillment from the activities (Filak & Pritchard, 2007; Deci et al., 1989).

This study explores the following questions about PRSSA faculty advising:

RQ1: What are the common qualities of faculty who assume the role of PRSSA adviser?

RQ2: What is the common level of knowledge about the roles and responsibilities related to PRSSA faculty advising?

RQ3: What are the most significant challenges for PRSSA faculty advisers?

RQ4: What factors have the greatest impact on PRSSA faculty advisers' role satisfaction?

Method

This study used a two-phase online questionnaire of current PRSSA faculty advisers. Data was collected for phase one of the study in November of 2019, and phase two was collected in January and February of 2020. Questionnaires were developed using Qualtrics software and distributed via individual emails to PRSSA faculty advisers. Survey procedures were approved by the respective institutional review boards of the authors.

Study Population

An initial request was placed through the PRSSA national office for a list of current PRSSA faculty advisers, and the request was denied. Moving forward, the authors identified PRSSA faculty advisers through the national chapter directory, available through the PRSSA national website, to develop an internal contact database of faculty advisers. When faculty adviser information was available in the PRSSA chapter directory, the authors conducted a search of faculty on university websites to identify the current PRSSA faculty adviser. In total, 381 PRSSA faculty advisers, including co-advisers, were identified at 370 U.S. university chapters. Participants were recruited for the phase one questionnaire through three unique tactics. First, a questionnaire information card with a QR code was given to advisers at the 2019 PRSSA National Conference. Second, three rounds of email invitations were sent to PRSSA faculty advisers over two months. Finally, questionnaire invitations were posted on private digital/social media groups such as the PRSSA Advisers Google group, PRSA

Educators Academy social media channels, and Facebook groups for the Social Media Professors Community and Student-Run Agency Advisers. A qualifying question at the beginning of the survey and online individual interview asked participants if they were a current faculty adviser of their university PRSSA chapter. In total, 153 advisers completed the questionnaire for a response rate of 40.2%.

At the end of the phase one questionnaire, participants could opt-in to the phase two questionnaire through a separate sign-up link. Additional invitations were distributed to current PRSSA faculty advisers who: a) won the PRSSA Faculty Adviser of the Year award in the past decade, b) were members of the Commission on Public Relations Education, or c) were a Champion for PRSSA, a subgroup of PRSA "that brings together those who have special, ongoing interest in PRSSA, its student members and public relations education" (PRSA, n.d., para 1). In total, 44 invitations were distributed for the second-phase questionnaire, and 19 advisers completed the qualitative questions, for a response rate of 43.2%.

Phase One Questionnaire Design

The first phase questionnaire included 70 items that measured five categories of information: a) general chapter information, b) faculty adviser information, c) PRSSA mission and requirements, d) faculty adviser insights, and e) personal and university demographic information. No identifying information was collected, though respondents were able to opt-in for a $40 Amazon gift card drawing through a separate link.

General Chapter Information

This section included 12 questions to collect PRSSA chapter data about: a) chapter size, b) chapter practices including the frequency of chapter meetings, executive board meetings, fundraisers, and attending PRSA sponsored chapter events, and c) chapter participation in PRSSA-affiliated competitions, national awards programs, scholarships, and grants.

Faculty Adviser Information

Sixteen questions covered topics such as a) the appointment process for PRSSA faculty advisers and the length of their term, b) faculty status and expected workload in teaching, research, and service, c) time commitment to PRSSA faculty advising duties, and d) compensation for faculty advising.

PRSSA Mission and Requirements

Participants were shown excerpts of the PRSSA 2019-2020 Chapter Handbook (PRSSA, n.d.-c) that included Mission Statement (p. 5), Minimum Chapter Standards (p. 9), and Faculty Adviser Responsibilities (p. 12). Participants answered 12 Likert-scale questions to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to their personal understanding of the above areas as well as their perceptions of how well PRSSA chapter members, department colleagues, and administrators understood those guidelines.

Faculty Adviser Insights

Participants answered six Likert-scale questions that assessed their level of agreement with statements related to a) personal satisfaction as a PRSSA faculty adviser, b) confidence in balancing PRSSA faculty advising with teaching, research, service and personal life, and c) their belief about whether first-year faculty should advise PRSSA.

Personal and University Demographic Information

One personal demographic question related to gender was included to further examine Waymer's (2014) findings of gender-based differences in PRSSA faculty advising. University demographic information included a) university location based on PRSA district chapter maps, b) university size, c) Carnegie classification, and d) program certification through the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication or PRSA Certification in Public Relations Education.

Phase Two Questionnaire Design

The phase two questionnaire included 13 open-ended questions to gain additional qualitative insights about PRSSA faculty advising. Two rounds of email invitations were sent over one month. Participants answered questions about various aspects of PRSSA faculty advising including: a) how PRSSA national organization expectations align with university expectations, b) how PRSSA faculty advisers' workload compared to other service duties (including advising other student organizations, c) what parts of PRSSA faculty advising administration doesn't understand or recognize, d) how support services from the PRSSA national office help with PRSSA faculty advising, and e) what a faculty member should be aware of regarding PRSSA advising before accepting the role.

Results

Who is the PRSSA Faculty Adviser?

The vast majority of PRSSA faculty advisers are female at 69.9% (n = 107), followed by males at 29.8% (n = 44) and one respondent who declined to identify gender. PRSSA faculty advising duties primarily fall to full-time lecturers at 39.3% (n = 57) and tenure-track assistant professors at 29.0% (n = 42). Associate professors accounted for 19.3% (n = 28) of respondents, followed by full professors at 11.0% (n = 16), and one respondent who was a part-time lecturer.

Most respondents advised small- to medium-size PRSSA chapters with 37.5% (n = 57) advising chapters with 10-19 dues-paid members and 27.6% (n = 42) for chapters with 20-49 members. Only 18.4% (n = 28) advised chapters of more than 50 members. Advisers of chapters with fewer than 10 members accounted for 16.4% (n = 25) of respondents. An information request was made with the PRSA national office to provide the breakdown of all PRSSA chapters by membership size for 2020 to provide comparison data. The request was denied because

"The membership numbers for both, PRSA and PRSSA change daily – especially PRSSA given its dues deadline ends is December 1st which will change the numbers dramatically. Prefer the member numbers do not get published given they change so frequently" (J. Starr, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

When examining how PRSSA faculty advisers come into their role, the majority (53.7%) of respondents reported that it was part of their job duties with 34.7% (*n* = 51) who were appointed by a supervisor, and 19.0% (*n* = 28) indicated advising was part of their official job description. Among the remaining responses, 27.9% (*n* = 41) volunteered for the role, 8.8% (*n* = 13) were elected by the PRSSA chapter, and 9.5% (*n* = 14) assumed the role by an "other" means such as founding the chapter (*n* = 5) or were the only faculty member available (*n* = 5).

When asked about the term length as PRSSA adviser, 72.1% (*n* = 106) of respondents indicated that no timeline was determined. Remaining respondents indicated defined term limits including 1 year at 2.7% (*n* = 4), 1 year with renewal at 8.2% (*n* = 12), two to three years at 6.1% (*n* = 9), four to five years at 2.7 % (n = 4), and five years or more at 8.2% (*n* = 12).

In terms of teaching load, 38.5% (*n* = 55) of respondents teach three classes per semester, followed closely by four classes at 37.8% (*n* = 54). The teaching loads of the remaining respondents were two classes per semester at 13.3% (*n* = 19), five classes or more at 8.4% (*n* = 12), and one class at 2.1% (*n* = 3).

What is the Common Level of Knowledge About the Roles and Responsibilities Related to PRSSA Faculty Advising?

Respondents were asked their level of agreement, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with a statement that they understood the purpose of PRSSA and their perceptions that chapter members, colleagues, and administration understood the purpose of PRSSA. Faculty advisers agreed that they understand the purpose of

PRSSA (*M* = 4.42, *SD* = .84), though they indicated less agreement that PRSSA chapter members (*M* = 3.83, *SD* = .948), colleagues (*M* = 3.12, *SD* = 1.11), and administration (*M* = 3.18, *SD* = 1.20) understood the purpose of PRSSA. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test determined no significant differences between groups along the factors of gender or employment status. No correlations were found for PRSSA chapter size or university size.

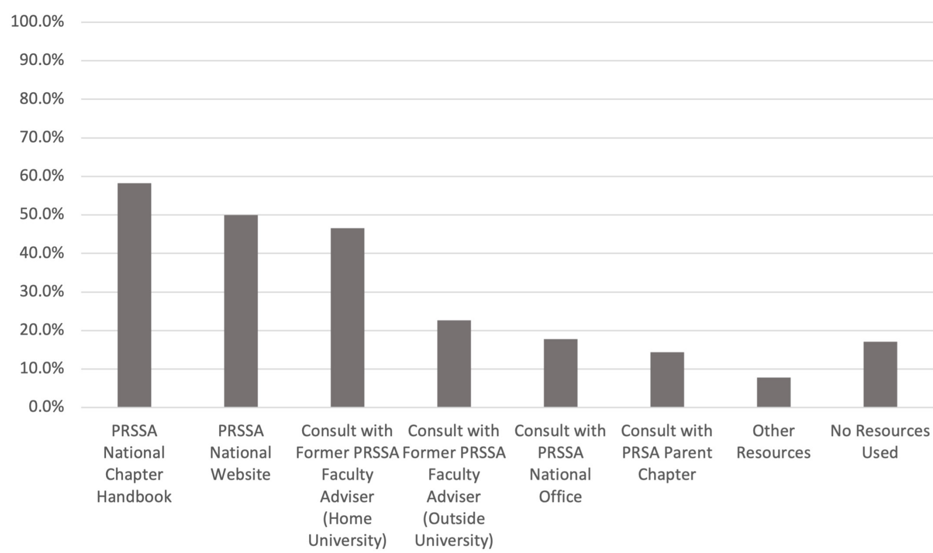
In a related question, respondents were asked their level of agreement, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with a statement related to the understanding of the minimum chapter standards. Respondents indicated less agreement with their understanding of the minimum standards of PRSSA chapters, though they still somewhat agreed with the statement (*M* = 4.0, *SD* = 1.18). Lesser agreement was found in respondents' perception of understanding of minimum PRSSA chapter standards among chapter members (*M* = 3.4, *SD* = 1.28), colleagues (*M* = 2.56, *SD* = 1.24), and administration (*M* = 2.57, *SD* = 1.26). An ANOVA test determined no significant difference between gender or employment status. A moderate positive correlation was found between chapter size and the respondents' agreement that their administration understood the minimum chapter standards, $r(132) = .195$, $p < .05$, though the same relationship was not reflected in university size.

When asked about what training resources were used when assuming the role of PRSSA faculty adviser, respondents were most likely to use the PRSSA chapter handbook at 58.2% (*n* = 85), followed by advising materials on the PRSSA national website at 50.0% (*n* = 73). Respondents also consulted with a former PRSSA faculty adviser at the same university at 46.6%, or another university at 22.6% (*n* = 33). Respondents were least likely to reach out to the PRSSA national office at 17.8% (*n* = 26) or PRSA parent chapter office at 14.4% (*n* = 21). Respondents also indicated "other" training resources at 8.2% (*n* =

12) that included faculty adviser training available at the PRSA national conference (*n* = 2) or previous experience with professional or student organizations (*n* = 4). More than 17% (*n* = 25) of respondents did not use any training resources when assuming the role of PRSSA faculty adviser (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Training Resources that PRSSA Faculty Advisers Used When Assuming Their Role



What are the Most Significant Challenges for PRSSA Faculty Advisers?

Workload

The first step of examining the impact of PRSSA faculty advising was to ask tenured and tenure-track respondents to explain their expected workload breakdown in the context of teaching, research, and service as described in their respective faculty handbooks. Overall, the mean was 52.9 % for teaching, research 27.1%, and service 20.0%. The second step was to ask the same respondents their actual workload to determine if

PRSSA faculty advising caused deviations from the expected workload. The mean percentages for actual workload were 51.4% for teaching, 19.1% research, and 29.5 % service. Differences between expected workload and actual workload in research and service were noted among all respondents, regardless of the size of the chapter they advised (see Table 1).

Table 1

Expected and Actual Workloads of PRSSA Faculty Advisers by Chapter Size

PRSSA Chapter Size by Members		Expected Teaching Load	Actual Teaching Load	Expected Research Load	Actual Research Load	Expected Service Load	Actual Service Load
Less than 10	Mean*	57.8%	56.3%	25.0%	17.3%	17.4%	26.4%
	N	14	14	14	14	14	14
	Std. Deviation	13.965	18.306	15.120	15.558	8.537	12.811
10-19	Mean	54.2%	52.2%	24.3%	16.8%	21.5%	31.0%
	N	43	42	43	42	43	42
	Std. Deviation	12.292	16.439	11.674	9.460	7.001	12.139
20-49	Mean	52.5%	50.4%	29.7%	21.8%	17.9%	27.8%
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
	Std. Deviation	14.365	16.940	12.746	12.680	8.647	15.982
50-99	Mean	41.7%	44.7%	35.6%	30.1%	22.7%	25.1%
	N	7	7	7	7	7	7
	Std. Deviation	9.895	9..499	9.217	6.362	10.452	8.194
100-149	Mean	34.0%	34.5%	47.0%	14.0%	19.0%	51.5%
	N	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Std. Deviation	1.414	13.435	18.385	12.728	19.799	26.163
Total	Mean	52.8%	51.4%	27.1%	19.1%	20.0%	29.5%
	N	86	85	86	85	86	85
	Std. Deviation	13.442	16.503	13.035	11.753	8.266	13.584

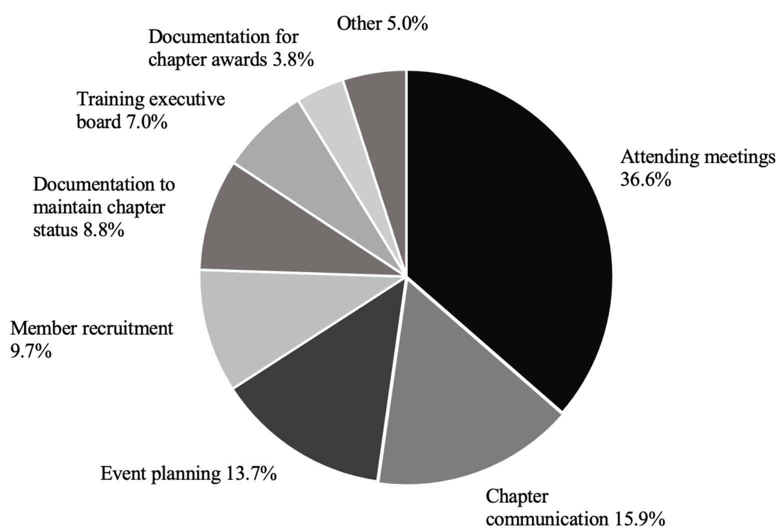
* Mean % (of time reported by advisors)

Time Commitment

When asked about their weekly time engaged in PRSSA faculty advising duties, 62.2% (n = 89) of respondents spent between one and three hours per week engaged in advising duties, followed by four-to-six hours per week at 16.8% (n = 24), and less than one hour per week at 16.1% (n = 23). Respondents who spent at least seven hours per week engaged in PRSSA faculty advising duties came in at 4.9% (n = 7). When taking a deeper look at what duties comprised the time spent in advising, 36.6% is spent attending PRSSA chapter and executive board meetings, followed by chapter communication at 15.9%, planning on- and off-campus events at 13.7%, PRSSA member recruitment at 9.7%, completing and submitting documentation to maintain chapter status with the PRSSA national office or university at 8.8%, training the chapter executive board at 7.0%, review and submission of documentation for PRSSA chapter awards at 3.8%, and 5.0% of time was spent engaged in other duties like writing thank-you notes, advising individual PRSSA members, and writing recommendation letters for chapter members (see Figure 2). There was a moderate positive correlation between PRSSA chapter size and the

Figure 2

Percentage of Time Committed to PRSSA Faculty Advising Duties



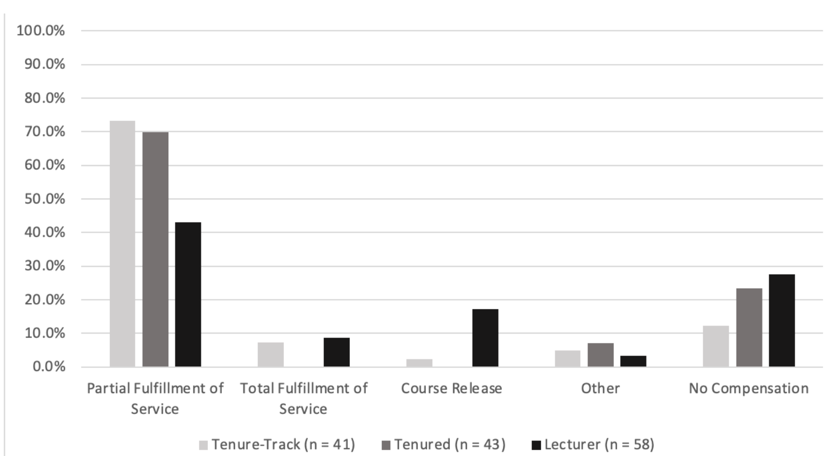
amount of time faculty advisers spent on related duties each week, $r(150) = .249$, $p < .001$.

Compensation

Compensation was examined in terms of expected workload and financial accommodations. Most PRSSA faculty advisers received some type of workload compensation for their service. Partial fulfillment of service was the most common form of compensation at 59.4% (n = 85), followed by a course release at 7.7% (n = 11), or total fulfillment of service requirements at 5.6% (n = 8). In contrast, 22.4% (n = 32) of respondents receive no workload compensation for their service as PRSSA faculty adviser. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test found no significant difference in workload compensation along the factors of gender or chapter size. A significant association existed between faculty status and workload compensation, X^2 (8, N = 142) = 23.046, p = .003. More lecturers indicated that they received a course release (n = 10) than tenure-track (n = 1) or junior (n = 0) faculty. Lecturers were also more likely to receive no compensation (n = 16) than tenure-track (n = 5) or tenured (n =10) faculty (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Workload Compensation by Faculty Status



In terms of financial compensation, 66.0% (n = 89) of respondents indicated their university fully paid their PRSA membership dues and an additional 2.9% (n = 4) received partial payment. Advisers who received no financial compensation accounted for 32.4% (n = 45) and 14 respondents declined to answer the question.

What Factors have the Greatest Impact on PRSSA Faculty Advisers' Role Satisfaction?

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of agreement, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with the statement, "I find satisfaction in being a PRSSA faculty adviser." Respondents at least somewhat agreed with the statement (M = 4.18, SD = 1.047). Various statistical tests (t-test, ANOVA, correlations) were conducted to determine what factors might impact role satisfaction among PRSSA faculty advisers. No significant differences were found along factors of gender, faculty status, chapter size, or university size. A moderate positive correlation was found with how many hours per week respondents engaged in PRSSA advising duties, $r(130) = .232$, $p < .001$.

Meeting Expectations

Respondents were asked their level of agreement, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, to statements about their confidence in meeting expectations as a PRSSA faculty adviser. Respondents indicated high confidence in meeting personal expectations (M = 4.43, SD = .910), as well as the expectations of their PRSSA chapter (M = 4.48, SD = .886), colleagues (M = 4.62, SD = .715), and administration (M = 4.58, SD = .742). An independent samples t-test found no differences in confidence between gender. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) found a significant difference in confidence in meeting administration expectations between faculty status, $F(2, 128) = 4.140$, $p = .018$, with lecturers expressing the greatest confidence (M = 4.77, SD = .505), by tenured faculty (M = 4.56, SD = .852), and tenure-track faculty expressing the least confidence (M = 4.33, SD = .838). A moderate positive correlation was found between chapter size and meeting colleagues' expectations, $r(136) = .280$, p <. 001, as well as between chapter size and meeting administration expectations, $r(136) = .305$, $p < .001$. University size also had a positive, though smaller, correlation with meeting administration expectations, $r(129) = .191$, $p < .05$. Moderate positive correlations were found between role satisfaction and confidence to meet personal expectations and the expectations of others, with each correlation equal or greater than $r(130) = .364$, $p < .001$ (see Table 2).

Table 2

Role Satisfaction and Meeting Expectations as PRSSA Faculty Adviser

		I find satisfaction in being a PRSSA faculty adviser.	I am confident in my ability to meet my personal expectations as PRSSA faculty adviser.	I am confident in my ability to meet my Chapter's expectations as PRSSA faculty adviser.	I am confident in my ability to meet my department/ school colleagues' expectations as PRSSA faculty adviser.	I am confident in my ability to meet my department/ school administration's expectations as PRSSA faculty adviser.
I find satisfaction in being a PRSSA faculty adviser.	Pearson Correlation	1	.534**	.424**	.388**	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Work and Life Balance

Respondents were asked their level of agreement, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with statements about their ability to balance PRSSA faculty advising with teaching, research, and service responsibilities, as well as their personal life. The mean response for all items indicated respondents experienced lesser agreement with confidence in balancing PRSSA faculty advising with teaching (M = 3.68, SD = 1.321), research, (M = 3.29, SD = 1.250), service (M = 3.96, SD = 1.261), or their personal life (M = 3.78, SD = 1.198). An independent samples t-test found significant differences between male and female faculty advisers in their level of agreement toward balancing advising with teaching, as well as personal life. Female respondents (M = 3.55, SD = 1.333) indicated less agreement than males (M = 4.05, SD = 1.224) in balancing PRSSA faculty advising with teaching, $t(129) = 1.980$, p = .05. Additionally, female respondents (M = 3.60, SD = 1.176) indicated less agreement than males (M = 4.25, SD = 1.156) in balancing PRSSA faculty advising with their personal life, $t(128) = 2.852$, $p = .005$. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test found no significant difference between faculty status. A moderate positive correlation was found between chapter size and agreement of balancing PRSSA faculty advising with service, $r(129) = .178$, $p < .05$, though no significant correlation was found for university size. Moderate positive correlations were found between role satisfaction and confidence in balancing workload/personal life with PRSSA faculty advising, with each correlation equal to or greater than $r(130) = .343$, $p < .001$ (see Table 3).

Advising PRSSA in the First Year on the Job

Respondents were asked their level of agreement, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, to the statement, "First year faculty should not advise PRSSA." Respondents (n =131) expressed limited agreement with statement (M = 3.57, SD = 1.342). Various tests (t-test, ANOVA, correlations) were conducted to determine differences among the factors of gender, faculty status, chapter size, university size, Carnegie classification of the university, compensation for advising, confidence in meeting expectations, balancing PRSSA advising with work/personal life, and personal satisfaction in advising PRSSA. Moderate negative correlations were found in relation to the balance with teaching responsibilities, $r(129) = -.223$, $p < .05$, balance with research responsibilities, $r(129) = -.288$, $p < .001$, and personal life, $r(129) = -.236$, $p < .001$ (see Table 4.)

Discussion

The current study provides a multidimensional perspective about the shared concerns and challenges of PRSSA faculty advisers. Through the theoretical lens of CARE—competence, autonomy, relatedness, and equity—the authors advocate for the following recommendations to benefit the advisers and members of the PRSSA organization.

Enhance Training and Support Services to Build the Feeling of Competence

PRSSA faculty advisers' satisfaction in their roles was significantly correlated to two key factors: a) confidence in meeting expectations and b) ability to balance PRSSA advising duties with other workload requirements and personal life. Meeting expectations at unique levels—personal, chapter, colleagues, and administration—all had a significant positive correlation on a PRSSA faculty adviser's sense of satisfaction in their role. Meeting expectations reflects the SDT needs of satisfaction of competence (Filak & Pritchard, 2007) and relatedness (Ryan et al., 1995), as well as the emotional satisfaction that can stem burnout (Brown & Roloff, 2011; Brown et al., 2014). In examining the impact of faculty status on confidence in meeting expectations of administration, lecturers expressed the greatest confidence. As lecturers often have significant industry experience and/or membership with PRSA, that experience might provide a better foundation of organizational knowledge and best practices in the PRSSA faculty advising role. Chapter size also demonstrated a smaller, yet significant, correlation with meeting the expectations of colleagues and administrators.

Table 3

Role Satisfaction and Work/Life Balance as PRSSA Faculty Adviser

		I find satisfaction in being a PRSSA faculty adviser.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with meeting my university's teaching expectations.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with meeting my university's research expectations.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with meeting my university's service expectations.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with my personal life.
I find satisfaction in being a PRSSA faculty adviser.	Pearson Correlation	1	.533**	.384**	.447**	.343**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4

Correlations Between "First Year Faculty Should Not Advise PRSSA" and Work/Life Balance

		I find satisfaction in being a PRSSA faculty adviser.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with meeting my university's teaching expectations.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with meeting my university's research expectations.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with meeting my university's service expectations.	I am able to balance PRSSA faculty advising with my personal life.
1st year faculty should not advise PRSSA.	Pearson Correlation	1	-.233*	-.288**	-.155	-.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010	.001	.077	.007
	N	131	131	131	131	131

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As membership recruitment can be a strong indicator of success, additional training resources, support services, and adviser mentorship programs should be proactively implemented for PRSSA faculty advisers who do not have previous experience with PRSA or PRSSA. Support services provide a strong foundation for chapter success and, in turn, improve satisfaction among faculty advisers (Filak & Pritchard, 2007), especially those who are junior faculty. A female assistant professor commented, “When I became an adviser last year, it would have been great to have some sort of guide...an idea of expectations would be nice.” While the PRSSA national website does contain written resources for faculty advisers, more efforts are needed from PRSSA national leadership to proactively identify new faculty advisers and provide comprehensive support service. As a female lecturer shared, “I don’t seem to receive a lot of support, email, materials from PRSSA National. Often feel like I am on my own to figure it all out.”

There was a significant negative correlation between a PRSSA faculty adviser’s ability to balance their advising duties with their other work duties or personal life and their belief that first year faculty should advise PRSSA. This is important because while nearly 30% of PRSSA faculty advisers who responded to this survey were tenure-track assistant professors, there was no correlation between faculty status and the level of agreement that first-year faculty should not advise PRSSA. That could be a potential indicator that advisors who are unable to balance advising with other work and/or their personal duties are experiencing burnout and would not recommend the experience to others.

Recommendations

Four key initiatives should be implemented by the PRSSA national office to improve the feeling of competence among PRSSA faculty advisers, which is positively correlated with job satisfaction. First, the PRSSA national office should empower faculty advisers to manage their chapter directory listing on the organizational website and add a feature to the chapter information page that notes when it was last updated. By maintaining a current directory, the national office can ensure communication is reaching the correct individuals. Second, more video training or synchronous training sessions should be offered by the PRSSA national office to ensure effective orientation of new faculty advisers and improve the understanding of the PRSSA mission, minimum chapter standards, and best practices of chapter management. Those materials should be clearly identified on the PRSSA national website and distributed as an electronic orientation package to new faculty advisers. Third, a district ambassador program, similar to the PRSSA national committee (PRSSA, n.d.-e), will allow ambassadors to act as a liaison between faculty advisers and PRSSA national leadership. Fourth, a faculty adviser mentorship program should be established by the PRSSA national office to pair veteran advisers with new advisers at different universities. While informal mentorships within universities might pair outgoing and incoming PRSSA faculty advisers, these relationships might not be an option when a current faculty adviser leaves the university. Through offering cross-university mentorship programs, the PRSSA national office can start new advisers on the right foot with community support and guidance. Finally, the authors recommend that first-year faculty should not advise PRSSA in a sole capacity but in a co-adviser capacity, when possible. As first-year faculty are often acclimating to the expectations of a new university and possibly a new city, a one-year transition period of co-advising will offer new faculty the time to become acquainted with PRSSA members, understand chapter expectations, and build vital networks in the professional community.

Support Autonomy in Meeting Unique Chapter Needs

In examining how PRSSA faculty advisers came into their roles, there was a common conflict between the guidelines of the PRSSA national office and internal practices of university departments. The national PRSSA Chapter Handbook states that the faculty adviser should be elected annually by the chapter membership (PRSSA, n.d.-c, p. 12), but fewer than than 10% of advisers came into their role through an election process. In contrast, more than half of the advisers have the role written into their job descriptions or were appointed by department supervisors. An appointment process circumvents the input of chapter members to select an adviser who understands the needs of the organization and an ability to provide effective counsel for successful chapter management. A common challenge for smaller universities is that there might only be one or two faculty who are qualified to assume the role of adviser. That scenario leads to another common aspect of faculty advising, in that more than 70% of advisers have no timeline determined for their role. An undetermined timeline can potentially lead to job burnout (Brown & Roloff, 2011) especially when no incentives or compensation exist for advising PRSSA.

Recommendation

As fewer than 10% of faculty advisers are currently elected to their role, this is an unnecessary policy that does not align with university needs. The authors recommend the elimination of the faculty adviser election requirement or engage in stronger educational efforts that explain why yearly elections of PRSSA faculty advisers are necessary to the health of individual chapters.

Foster Relatedness between PRSSA Stakeholder Groups

Support from colleagues, administration, and the PRSSA national office are crucial to the success of chapters, which can potentially have a dramatic positive impact on the PRSSA faculty adviser’s confidence in meeting expectations and greater role satisfaction. As the results of this study demonstrated, greater understanding is needed from colleagues and administration about the mission and minimum standards of PRSSA. A female assistant professor shared, "I do not get any support. It is really hard to get other faculty members excited about what PRSSA is doing or encourage their students to get involved." That understanding is especially important from administrators as they are often in the position to assign the faculty adviser and provide financial support to the organization through departmental funding. Respondents indicated they disagreed that administrators understood the minimum standards of PRSSA. While the PRSSA chapter might meet the university standards for a student organization, administrators might not understand that the chapter does not meet the minimum standards of the national PRSSA organization and, thus, runs the risk of having its status revoked. As an organization that charges $55 in 2019 for national dues, it is also important that students receive value-added chapter programming and support that justifies students' financial investment. A female lecturer shared, "I don't think our university has any idea what the PRSSA National values or expectations are. In general, PRSSA National's expectations are much more stringent than any the university requires of us."

Recommendations

While the PRSSA national board does include representation of one national faculty adviser, there is a missed opportunity to implement shared governance that is representative of a diverse community of PRSSA faculty advisers. The PRSSA national office should adopt an organizational philosophy that prioritizes stakeholder democracy (Deetz, 1995) where organization management, faculty advisers, student leaders, and university administration are working in consort to address common concerns and find mutually beneficial solutions. The authors recommend the establishment of an advisory board comprised of current PRSSA faculty advisers that includes a broad representation based on chapter size, geographic location, faculty status, and university Carnegie classification. The advisory board should meet, at minimum, once per semester to address ongoing issues and to identify emerging issues that impact the PRSSA organization. In addition to the establishment of the advisory board of PRSSA faculty advisers, the PRSSA national office should implement a yearly stakeholder summit that includes representation of the national student executive board, university administration, college relations committees of PRSA local chapters, professional advisers, and faculty advisers.

Advocate for PRSSA Faculty Adviser Equity

When analyzing the common qualities of PRSSA faculty advisers, nearly half of PRSSA faculty advisers teach four or more classes in addition to their advising duties. That workload can create a physical and emotional strain on advisers who feel like they are asked to do more than their colleagues. Equity emerged as the common thread through many shared challenges of PRSSA faculty advisers.

PRSSA faculty advisers face specific challenges regarding their workload, time commitment, and financial obligations related to their role. In examining the breakdown of workload along the context of teaching, research, and service, survey respondents indicated their expected workload (as described in their faculty handbook) and actual workload. There was minimal difference between expected and actual workload for teaching. In contrast, there was an inversion when examining the expected and actual workloads for research and service. This is important to note because PRSSA faculty advising increases the service workload for faculty, which is taking away from time that would be dedicated to research. This time imbalance includes the spontaneous demands of extra-role labor such as student recommendation letters and award applications that Brown and Roloff (2011) warned contribute to teacher stress and burnout. A male assistant professor offered this insight, “Advising PRSSA is at the bottom of my list. My other duties and workload is considered a higher priority by the university.”

In terms of actual time commitment, the vast majority of PRSSA faculty advisers spend between one and three hours per week on advising duties. When put into the context of a 40-hour week, that compromises between 2.5% to 7.5% of the workweek that is dedicated to PRSSA advising duties. Yet, 21.7% of faculty advisers spend more than four hours each week engaged in chapter duties. While PRSSA is commonly promoted as a "student-led organization," it should be noted that faculty advisers might shoulder a significant level of day-to-day management duties when executive boards are small, thus increasing their time commitment beyond their service expectations. A male associate professor stated,

> When you focus on the PRSSA Chapter, in building it and sustaining it, it becomes a part-time job that can easily consume 20 hours a week in peak periods of work. This has actually been an unhealthy tension that negatively impacts [the] service load, which puts the total workload out of balance.

In addition to the issue of time commitment, it is important to note the financial obligation required of PRSSA faculty advisers. As of 2020, national membership in the PRSA costs $260. Additional survey comments suggest that advisers are also active in local PRSA chapter, district, or national-level service commitments. Interest group or local chapter memberships may add $100 or more for each additional membership. A trip to the PRSSA or PRSA international conferences (including the PRSA Educators Academy's Super Saturday conference) is an additional layer to the financial investment wherein the adviser incurs an expense for hotel, airfare and ground transportation, conference registration fee, meals, social events, and celebration dinners or other events which are all charged a la carte and, then per organizational policy, awaits reimbursement if it is offered at all.

Despite the efforts through the national PRSSA office (PRSSA, n.d.-b) and PRSA Foundation (PRSA Foundation, 2020) to incentivize student engagement within PRSSA chapters through scholarships, grants, and awards, PRSA traditionally does not offer membership or conference discounts for PRSSA faculty advisors (though a limited PRSA national dues waiver was offered in the fall of 2020 due to COVID-19). Nearly one-third of faculty advisers who participated in this study indicated their university did not cover the cost of PRSA membership fees. Given the research findings that the vast majority of advisers are lecturers or junior faculty, the expense of PRSA membership might be a financial hardship to those who can least likely to afford it. The issue of financial compensation, minimally for dues, should be addressed by both the PRSSA national organization and university administrations to ensure PRSSA faculty advisers do not experience a financial burden as a result of their service. As research is often prioritized over service in tenure-and-promotion review, PRSSA faculty advising poses a potential threat to maintaining an active research agenda. That aligns with Waymer's (2014) finding that "females are carrying a larger service responsibility than their male counterparts at a potentially critical time in the tenure process" (p. 412). This study found the actual service load was significantly increased, and actual research load was decreased, in comparison to the stated expectations of the university faculty handbook. As a female tenure-track assistant professor shared, "One of the most frustrating parts is seeing the workload of other faculty members in the department. If they don't advise an org like PRSSA, they are able to accomplish a lot more research, or have time to pursue other areas of service."

Nearly 60% of PRSSA faculty advisers receive partial credit to their service requirement with their advising duties, but 24.5% receive no time compensation. That inconsistency can lead to feelings of inequality and frustration among advisers because there is no consistency in how their role applies in the annual review or tenure-and-promotion process.

One female assistant professor added context to this conundrum, "There are some schools that already grant their advisors course releases— so I do feel there should be consistencies and a recommendation by PRSSA— to recognize advisors." That sentiment was also reflected by a female associate professor,

> Frankly, if the strategic aim is to build a chapter that achieves Star status, regularly attends nationals, and generates teams for Bateman competitions, the faculty likely needs a course release to facilitate it, and the department needs to incorporate PRSSA into the annual budget to support the chapter.

Adding service assignments to advising can push PRSSA faculty advisers well beyond the expected service requirements, causing a situation where a) less time is given to research, b) there is a diminished work-life balance, or c) the PRSSA faculty adviser is not able to provide substantial counsel to maintain chapter success. The added stress of having to intentionally forego some PRSSA chapter advising standards to maintain career equilibrium ties to the emotional toll of not keeping promises (in this case, to the PRSSA chapter and stakeholders expecting chapter success) that Brown and Roloff (2011) warn contribute to burnout. Administrators need to communicate with PRSSA faculty advisers to understand how much time is spent advising and assign other service duties only in proportion to the overall expected service workload as determined by the university faculty handbook. This is best summarized by responses from a male lecturer, "I am not evaluated at all on PRSSA service for my evaluation. It's all teaching evaluation. Those courses are often a priority, meaning I tackle PRSSA when everything else is done."

An unexpected finding that emerged in this study was the impact of emotional labor on role satisfaction of PRSSA faculty advisers. Job-focused emotional labor is the "emotional display" that employees perform in a "people-centric" job with expected emotional duties (Brown et al., 2014). Emotional labor is another possible concern for advising. Teaching is already a job known to cause possible high negative emotional labor tolls due to sustained interaction with students of varying needs (Brown & Roloff, 2011; Brown et al., 2014; Zhang & Zhu, 2007), and adding advising creates another service component requiring sustained student interaction. “Teachers experience repeated interactions with the same students in a way that is both long-term and intense” (Brown et al., 2014, p. 207). As a female full professor said, “There is a lot of coaching and supporting, and it cannot be done in absentia.” Administrators should be sensitive to the extra-role labor and emotional labor of advising a student organization that can extend a faculty member’s service contribution beyond university expectations.

Recommendations

As the issue of equity emerged as the primary concern among PRSSA faculty advisers, the authors offer several recommendations to address this issue. First, the PRSSA national office should permanently waive a) the PRSA membership fee, b) local chapter membership fee, and c) PRSSA national conference registration fee. The waiving of those fees relieves the financial burden many faculty advisers personally shoulder and recognizes the value PRSSA faculty advisers bring in service to their respective chapters.

Second, the PRSSA national office should strongly advocate for time compensation for faculty advisers. As this study has demonstrated, PRSSA faculty advisers who receive little-to-no compensation in regard to time commitment often struggle to balance advising duties with other faculty job expectations. As a result, faculty advising might become a low-level priority that can be detrimental to growth of individual chapters. At minimum, the PRSSA national office should advocate for PRSSA faculty advisers to receive full credit for service requirements or, ideally, a course release for advising PRSSA. To manage a successful chapter might be compared to teaching a year-long campaigns class that can be aligned to specific learning outcomes in the public relations curriculum. By advocating for equitable time compensation, the PRSSA national office will provide necessary resources to faculty advisers to provide effective counsel to their chapters that support membership growth, improved programming, and greater participation in national initiatives and events.

Finally, the PRSSA national office should issue an informational document that can be distributed to university administration as an educational tool about the PRSSA organization and its expectations for university chapters. This document should provide a) the mission and scope of PRSSA, b) minimum PRSSA chapter standards, c) a detailed description of faculty adviser duties, d) minimum expectations of the time commitment to PRSSA faculty advising, e) financial obligations to be a PRSSA faculty adviser, and e) recommendations to fairly compensate PRSSA faculty advisers. The document should be developed with the input of the PRSSA faculty advisor board previously recommended in this paper.

Conclusion

This study represents a first wave of research by the authors about the opportunities and challenges of PRSSA faculty advising. As this study illustrates, PRSSA advising is an experience from which most faculty gain a strong sense of satisfaction. Yet, there are specific challenges that must be addressed to ensure that faculty are supported and compensated fairly. The confidence in meeting the expectations has a direct impact on role satisfaction of PRSSA faculty advisers. Greater efforts should be implemented to provide advisors with the tools, resources, and support—at both the university level and via the PRSSA national office—to help faculty advisers, especially those new to the role, succeed in their efforts. This paper serves as a collaborative tool for current and future advisers, university administrators, and PRSSA national leadership to understand the common challenges PRSSA faculty advisers experience. Likewise, this study allows for faculty members to create strategies for chapter and student-level improvements based on the reported experiences of other advisers based on their chapters. This research serves as a tool through which to create a more controlled investment of time and energy into the service realm of faculty requirements for promotion and/or tenure.

Certain limitations existed in this study. Though best efforts were made by the authors to ensure all faculty advisers could participate in the study, only a small number (n = 2) of faculty advisers of large PRSSA chapters (>100 members) participated in the study. Greater participation from large chapter advisers might have provided insights into best practices that could be shared to benefit small chapters' development and growth. In addition, a parallel faculty adviser study was launched by the PRSSA national office during the same timeline of phase two of this study, which might have limited participation in the qualitative questionnaire. While the PRSSA national office did launch new initiatives in 2019 in an effort to address concerns expressed by faculty advisers through its own research, the results of this research were not made public. There are key issues found in this study related to role satisfaction, as well as work and life balance, that remained unaddressed by PRSSA national. Finally, information requests by the authors to provide organization membership data were denied by the PRSA national offices.

Future research by the authors will focus on solutions to address the challenges identified in the current study. Specifically, the issues of emotional and extra-role labor appear to hold importance to many PRSSA faculty advisers, and the authors will pursue additional research to explore those issues in more depth. In addition, further research should explore the role of the professional adviser as a partner who helps shoulder the load of advising duties. Through collaborative participation between PRSSA national leadership, university administration, current and present faculty advisers, and chapter leadership, future research holds the potential to create a more rewarding and successful experience for PRSSA faculty advisers and their chapters.

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BOOK REVIEW

Discovering Public Relations: An Introduction to Creative and Strategic Practices

Reviewed by
Tiffany Gallicano, UNC Charlotte

Author: Karen Freberg
Sage 2020
ISBN: 9781544355375 (pbk)
ISBN: 9781544355399 (ebk)
Number of pages: 367

https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/introprvfg

Karen Freberg (2021) wrote, "Ultimately, to make change happen in the field, you have to do it yourself. The time is now for the field to finally move forward in a new and innovative direction" (p. xxi). Freberg delivers on her promise for an invigorating PR textbook that prepares students for the industry now—and instructs them about how to be trailblazers in their own right as they carry the discipline into the future.

Message from a Maverick

The preface would be more aptly titled "Message From a Maverick" as Karen Freberg takes the stage to denounce PR textbooks (as outdated); the chasm between the PR classroom and the industry; and the cannibalization of PR by disciplines that are quick to teach social media strategy and digital storytelling, such as English; and the PR industry for its stagnation. She rebukes bias based on academic pedigree and particular research agendas in public relations. (I'm interpreting the latter item refers to the former stigma against research in public relations education).

A Textbook Unicorn

Freberg's book is rich with coverage in areas that update the traditional textbook, such as a contemporary discussion of diversity and inclusion, a full chapter on business acumen, a chapter about client and personal branding, and a deep dive into creative content and content marketing. Freberg plays to her considerable strengths in these areas and fills the pages with eye-catching social media screenshots, diagrams, and industry examples. Each chapter is enhanced by an infographic, game changer highlight, case study, summary, relevance to the APR exam (via listed areas the chapter covers), and key terms.

Ancillary materials include sample syllabi, discussion questions, activities, slides, and test bank questions. Textbook adopters can also gain access to a private Facebook group, where instructors can ask questions and invite the author to chat with their classes. The Facebook group has helpful resources, including a guide to which areas of the book will help students review for portions of the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations exam.

Small Shortcomings

Although the book has considerable strengths, there are areas for improvement in the next edition. This is not the only recent textbook in which I have noticed the types of problems I address here, which could be endemic of a larger issue in the review process of recent PR textbooks.

Moral relativism. I paused when reading the glib treatment of global ethics: "What is considered unprofessional in one country may be perfectly okay in another" (p. 304). Missing from this point was the follow-up that just because a practice is permissible by members of another country does not mean that it is moral. The textbook seems to greenlight the "do as the Romans do" philosophy, which means that instructors using this textbook should add a unit on moral relativism to their lecture. Historic legends, such as Leon Sullivan, have demonstrated the ability to stand for human rights and make long-term gains not only for a single company and industry but also for humanity. To counterbalance the textbook, I simultaneously required my students to read the position papers from the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (n.d.).

Strawman argument. In the opening chapter, Freberg creates what appears to be a strawman argument about outmoded academic definitions of public relations; however, the academic textbook definitions she uses are old. Cutlip and Center's 1971 definition is used, rather than the most recent one: "Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Broom & Sha, 2013, p. 5). She juxtaposes the academic definition with PRSA's definition, which explains that PR is "a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (Public Relations Society of America, 2021). The positioning continues the rift between academe and the industry that Freberg sets up in the preface, which does not seem like a productive way to get students excited about the rest of their academic education in PR. If the author sticks with the agitative approach, however, the strawman argument can be avoided by using the most recent definition of Cutlip and Center, found in Broom and Sha (2013).

Inaccurate literature. Close attention is needed to how academic literature is represented. For example, the statement, "Grunig and Repper (1992) defined stakeholders as publics, implying they are a broader group comprised of anyone an organization needs to be aware of for its well-being" (Freberg, 2021, p. 5). J. E. Grunig distinguished between publics and stakeholders, "Often the terms stakeholder and public are used synonymously. There is a subtle difference, however, that helps to understand strategic planning of public relations. …Only stakeholders who are or become aware and active can be described as publics" (Grunig

& Repper, 1992, p. 125). Students, of course, will not be disadvantaged by this lack of precision; however, it is a change that should be made to the next edition.

Muddled PR models. The infographic of the PR models represented the distinction between asymmetrical and symmetrical communication in a muddled way. According to the infographic, "The two-way asymmetrical model is focused on two-way communication, allowing both parties to have a chance to have a conversation, though one has more power than the other. [Symmetrical communication] … is very similar, except that the symmetrical model focuses on equal power between the parties in conversation" (p. 40). Additionally, in the chapter, Freberg (2021) wrote, "Two-way asymmetrical communication focuses on providing a balanced conversation, but there is still one party that is overseeing the power within the conversation" (p. 23). By comparison, J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992) wrote, "Asymmetrical communication is unbalanced. It leaves the organization as is and tries to change the public" (p. 289). The notion of "two-way" comes in through the use of research to persuade. J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992) described symmetrical communication by stating, "Unlike the two-way asymmetrical model, however, it uses research to facilitate understanding and communication rather than to identify messages most likely to motivate or persuade publics" (p. 289).

The infographic suggests that a conversation with unequal power is the distinction; however, asymmetrical communication does not require a conversation. Asymmetrical communication simply requires research, which undergraduates are unlikely to view as the same as a conversation. Furthermore, the symmetrical definition in the infographic should be centered on mutual understanding and benefit rather than how much power the parties have in the relationship.

Theoretical limitation. Although this is the most up-to-date textbook in PR I have read, more can be done to update the inclusion of theory, and additional precision would be useful in how theory is described. Freberg (2021) wrote, "Grunig's situational theory of publics helps us figure out what will motivate our audiences to listen act and engage in a conversation with us and our clients" (p. 182). While technically true–we can make an educated guess about how clients might engage in a conversation based on the theory–the theory specifically predicts only information processing and information seeking. However, the updated extension of the theory, the situational theory of problem solving, can be used to predict conversation, among other valuable outcomes, and it would be a better theory to explain when making an argument for the prediction of conversations (see Kim & Grunig, 2011).

Nomenclature. The term controlling mutuality is used, which is the first time I've heard that form of the term, and the term is repeated in the test bank. The term is simply control mutuality but rewriting it as "mutual control" for ease of understanding would be a fine alternative (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Conclusion

"Discovering Public Relations" represents a substantial advancement in public relations education, and I am grateful to Freberg (2021) and the people with whom she worked for producing such an engaging, useful book for the Principles of Public Relations course.

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BOOK REVIEW

PR Women with Influence: Breaking Through the Ethical and Leadership Challenges

Reviewed by
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Author: Juan Meng and Marlene S. Neill
Peter Lang, 2021
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PR Women with Influence: Breaking Through the Ethical and Leadership Challenges addresses the dearth of research regarding leadership development and ethical leadership among women public relations professionals–and the challenges and opportunities surrounding such. Over four distinct sections, the book assesses the landscape of extant literature regarding women, public relations, leadership, and influence. The book also highlights findings from both quantitative and qualitative inquiry and maps out an ecosystem for supporting women leaders in public relations. The mixed method approach strengthens the book, which is well organized and easy to read. The scope of the book, which examines the intersections of leadership, gender, and ethics, is novel.

Content

In the first section, the authors review extant literature and acknowledge the longstanding power–and gender-based issues of the public relations profession. Despite majority status and strong leadership competencies, for example, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions across the profession. Moreover, women of color are especially absent from the public relations field and in leadership roles. To address the issues identified, the authors propose five research questions exploring: 1) women public relations professionals' perceptions of attitudinal, structural, and social barriers to leadership advancement; 2) women public relations professionals' perceptions of factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership; 3) women public relations professionals' definitions regarding influence in their leadership paths; 4) women public relations professionals' perceptions of professional and family responsibilities; and, 5) women public relations professionals' perceptions regarding mentoring and leadership advancement. Additionally, the authors outline the research design and methods that guide the book. They substantially describe the two-phase approach to the research design, involving both a survey (n=512) and in-depth interviews with 51 women who identify as public relations professionals. The demographic profiles of participants are detailed well and the make-up of participants in the study reflects that of the public relations discipline.

The second section presents the results of the authors' national survey on women public relations professionals' leadership and ethical challenges. The first of two chapters in this section addressed situational barriers to women's leadership advancement. Of note, the authors found that workplace structures, double standards regarding domestic roles and professional demands, and societal attitudes regarding women professionals were the three most common barriers cited by respondents. Exploring situational barriers among women of color, results indicated that they faced additional race-based stereotypes, occupational stereotypes, and inhospitable organizational cultures. Looking to the next three years in the industry, respondents indicated that they hope for greater improvements to work-life balance, increased women as role models in high-level positions, and increased mentors advocating for their advancement.

The second chapter in this section addressed perceptions of ethical leadership among survey respondents. Results indicated that women public relations professionals perceive influential leadership as being seen as a trusted advisor, having career advancement opportunities, and holding a voice to which colleagues listen. Strategies perceived to best garner influence and support ethical counsel among women public relations professionals included:

- inviting questions and dialogue
- using legitimacy appeals
- providing scenarios to illustrate potential consequences or alternatives to a situation
- utilizing research to support counsel

Regarding ethical principles and leadership, survey respondents ranked communications leaders as most ethical when they conduct their life in an ethical manner, set an example for how to do things ethically, make fair and ethical decisions, and discuss ethics and values with employees, among other actions.

The final chapter synthesized the national survey results, which addressed women's leadership development and participation opportunities in public relations. Respondents cited that on-the-job training programs to increase competencies, internal leadership and development programs, external leadership and development programs, working with a mentor, and engagement in formal leadership education were important resources necessary in organizations to support women's leadership growth. The authors suggested that organizations help women's leadership potential by encouraging their participation in professional organizations, cultivating more inclusive work environments, and fostering more diverse leadership teams.

Complementing the findings from the national survey, the book's third section details findings from in-depth conversations with 51 women leaders in public relations in mid–and senior–level positions. Findings suggest that women leaders in public relations defined influence as "being a trusted advisor, practicing thought leadership, being a subject matter expert, and exerting a voice that executives listen to, and gaining the respect of other leaders" (p. 129). Leadership challenges cited by women interviewees often differed from their male counterparts. For example, interview findings illustrated how women cited enduring stereotypical gendered expectations regarding their workplace behaviors and a lack of acknowledgement, visibility, or support in spaces dominated by men. Additionally, race posed a barrier to the advancement of African American, Latina, and Asian American professionals, as they faced forms of pigeonholing, discrimination, and invisibility. Women leaders in public relations also defined ethical leadership with references to integrity, transparency, honesty, respect, moral courage, and fairness. To provide ethical counsel, participants discussed strategies such as utilizing research or case studies, providing scenarios, playing devil's advocate, recruiting allies for support, taking part in dialogue, and sharing personal experiences. Women professionals found mentoring and support networks to be vital to ethical leadership.

The book concludes with a fourth section that offers a summary of the research findings and proposes a path for future research. In particular, the authors suggest that additional research must be conducted: a) to address global perspectives regarding women and leadership in public relations, b) to strengthen intersectional approaches to researching leadership and women in public relations, c) to understand mentoring and its role in professional development, and d) to describe and expand notions of ethical leadership.

Contribution to Public Relations Education

Through a detailed analysis of their survey and interview findings, Meng and Neill offer a glimpse into the gendered and raced realities of the public relations profession. Their book contributes to public relations education by highlighting the need for ethics and leadership-based support, training, mentoring, and education for public relations students and professionals alike. From this book, public relations educators will gain an understanding of the ethical and leadership values that are important to seasoned professionals in public relations, but also gain an awareness of the various cultural and structural barriers that still disadvantage women professionals from achieving greater leadership potential. Educators may wish to integrate practices detailed in the book into their own teaching by offering mentoring opportunities, supplementary learning opportunities, and frank dialogue about ethical competencies and barriers to leadership still affecting women in public relations.

Critique

I applaud the authors on this extensive research undertaking, which advances our understanding of the public relations profession at the intersections of gender, leadership, and ethics. However, in order to strengthen this study and future scholarship on the topic, I recommend more integration of insights from feminist theory, critical race theory, and queer theory and more attention to the vast, intersecting avowed and ascribed identities that factor into women's leadership and advancement. This study and future scholarship exploring women, leadership, and ethics must acknowledge and explore sexual identity in public relations, for example. Inclusion of the lived experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) women are necessary for a richer, deeper understanding of public relations work and professional advancement. Extant literature has long acknowledged the bigotry, tokenism, discrimination, exclusion, and prevention of workplace advancement for LGBTQ individuals (e.g. Tindall, 2013; Tindall & Waters, 2012;

Waters, 2013). How does heteronormativity embedded in public relations practices, structures, and discourses contribute to lack of advancement, mentoring, and leadership potential for the vast spectrum of women-identifying individuals in public relations?

Audience

This book would appeal most to and contribute to U.S.-based public relations scholars and educators. The reading is also relevant for scholars in the adjacent fields of management, marketing, or integrated communications. Because this is a niche area of research and practice, it is most appropriate as reading for graduate-level or professional-level public relations courses, such as Public Relations Management or Gender in Communication.

PR Women with Influence: Breaking Through the Ethical and Leadership Challenges complements *Gaining Influence in Public Relations: The Role of Resistance in Practice* by Berger & Reber (2006) and offers a necessary deeper dive into the leadership and influence experiences of women in public relations. Additionally, the book complements Fitzpatrick & Bronstein's (2006) Ethics in Public Relations: Responsible Advocacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Meng and Neill's book offers a necessary and timely empirical snapshot of the intersection of women, leadership, and ethical counsel in public relations. The study was extensive and well structured. The flow of the book and presentation of the findings was well organized and clearly written. It makes a solid addition to the libraries of public relations scholars, professionals and students and serves as an important springboard for future debate and research.

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BOOK REVIEW

Public Relations: Competencies and Practice

Reviewed by
David Remund, PRSA Fellow

Author: Carolyn Kim
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As noted by scholar and editor Carolyn Kim, these are challenging times for society and those who work in public relations. Trust in organizations and the media has eroded. Exceptional and authentic leadership are increasingly needed to foster trusting and mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. *Public Relations: Competencies and Practice* is designed to help aspiring practitioners and emerging leaders better understand these skill sets and how they should be applied. The reader is invited to explore what it means to truly succeed in public relations today – and across a spectrum of specialized practice areas.

Content and Scope

Public Relations: Competencies and Practice is really two books in one. The first half of the book explores the competencies necessary to make a real and meaningful impact in modern public relations practice. The second half of the book surveys a broad spectrum of specialization areas and industries supported by public relations practice. In other words, Public Relations: Competencies and Practice details what it takes to practice public relations effectively and the industries within which a strong and ethical practitioner can make an impact.

Kim, as editor, presents a collection of 22 chapters, each written by a leading expert in the public relations field. She recruited a who's who of contemporary scholars and thought leaders for this unique book, and that factor lends exceptional credibility and substance to this anthology. It would be difficult to find another book that covers so much ground and does so with such clarity and command; that is a credit not only to Kim, but to each of the exceptional scholars who contributed chapters.

The chapters begin with clear definitions of key concepts and, as appropriate, more detailed explication. Each chapter concludes with a summary of intended learning outcomes as well as a thoughtful profile of an esteemed practitioner with specialized expertise. This easy-to-follow framework helps the reader absorb the rich substance of each chapter while conjuring parallels to real-world circumstances.

Several chapters deserve special merit: Business Literacy (Ch. 6, Swanson), Content Creation (Ch. 7, Tenderich), and Stewardship (Ch. 11, Pressgrove and Harrison) are aspects of public relations practice too often overlooked or minimized. Yet, understanding how organizations stay financially strong, how they tell their stories effectively across platforms, and how they foster donor relations, if applicable, are areas of increasing importance for many sectors and practitioners. Additionally, the examination of Ethics (Ch. 5, Neill) is exceptionally well-written for the intended audience, including the moving charge to "start at your level of influence" and think about ethics before an ethical dilemma happens. As well, the section on Legal Considerations (Ch. 8, Gower) provides an easily-understandable survey of key concepts and concerns without piling on detailed cases and becoming too technically cumbersome. Finally, an unexpected unit about Work-Life Balance (Ch. 13, Shen) provides an honest examination of the heavy toll that working in public relations can take; impressively, this chapter provides practical and meaningful strategies for finding such balance.

Contribution to PR Education

Kim and collaborators have delivered a volume that effectively and strongly addresses the central argument of the collection: that trust is fading, relationships are paramount, and the public relations profession needs competent, authentic leaders who can step up and take charge. This book provides important insights and actionable ideas for the individual practitioner. Certainly, other books touch on many of these ideas, but this collection stands alone in both breadth and depth.

Notably, *Public Relations: Competencies and Practices* is a true anthology. The diverse voices and perspectives of the chapter authors reflect well on the complexity of the profession. Rather than a single-note examination of such a dynamic industry, this book effectively employs multiple authors using a consistent framework to deliver a rich, thought-provoking and ultimately digestible survey of contemporary practice. It is easy to imagine undergraduate students and emerging professionals diving into the various sections of this book for insights and ideas. Instructors will certainly appreciate that this book includes examples of a syllabus, midterm and final project, as well as discussion questions.

Weaknesses and Omissions

It is difficult to criticize such a comprehensive and commendable book. However, a few gaps should be noted. The chapter on International Communication (Ch. 4, Bardhan), while strong on its own merits, feels insufficient for these times. An accompanying chapter or chapters diving more deeply into global versus national considerations, as well as the many cultural factors and concerns transcending geographic boundaries, would have been helpful. The book also combines political communications and government communications into one chapter, and agency and corporate perspectives into another; in both instances, the double-up topics comprising the chapter could have been sub-divided to provide more in-depth examination.

Notably, *Public Relations: Competencies and Practice* includes a chapter on measurement and evaluation, yet not one on research and planning. Likewise, there is not a standalone chapter on the integral discipline of issues management; a chapter on crisis communications makes several nods to the importance of risk evaluation yet the content is heavily balanced toward reactive response rather than proactive measures.

One of the most glaring oversights is military communications; this field of specialization is growing and becoming ever more sophisticated, and one that contributes greatly to national security. In fact, the Department of Defense collaborated with Public Relations Society of America and the University Accreditation Board to create a tailored credential for military communicators, the APR+M designation.

Level of Reader Expertise / Knowledge

Public Relations: Competencies and Practice seems thoughtfully written with the student and new professional in mind. As such, the book surveys a considerable number of key concepts and does so in a digestible tone and with relatable examples. At times, the book even feels conversational; imagine an engaging guest lecture or a meaningful one-on-one mentoring session. That is the spirit this book conveys, making this collection appealing to students and effective for instructors.

Conclusion

There is likely not a single book that can explain the public relations profession in its entirety and complexity, and particularly so from the vantage point of a practitioner and the skills and qualities one needs to thrive in today's challenging circumstances. Yet, *Public Relations: Competencies and Practices* comes close. The editor and authors are to be commended for covering so much vital ground and addressing so many important concerns, and also helping convey what all of that knowledge means to the varied sectors of public relations practice. This book is a substantive and moving examination of the profession at a particularly important crossroads.