

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

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.

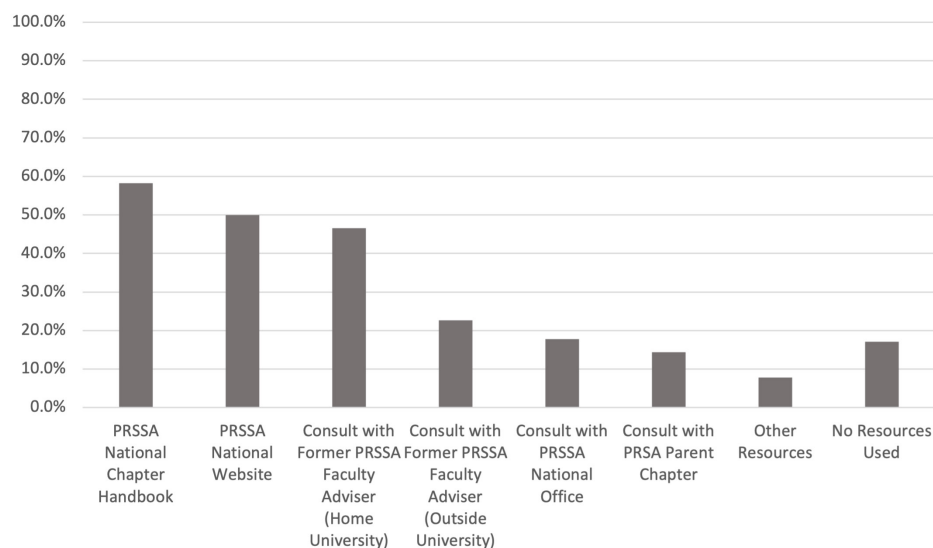
In a related question, respondents were asked their level of agreement, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, with a statement related to the understanding of the minimum chapter standards. Respondents indicated less agreement with their understanding of the minimum standards of PRSSA chapters, 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

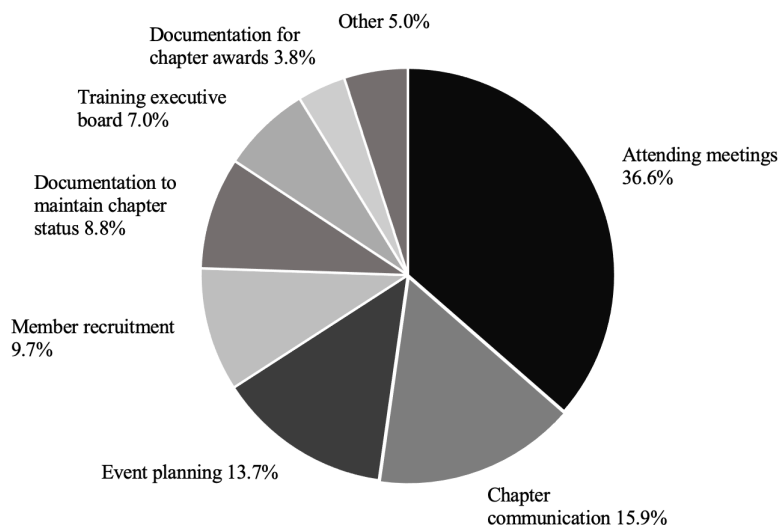
* Mean % (of time reported by advisors)

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



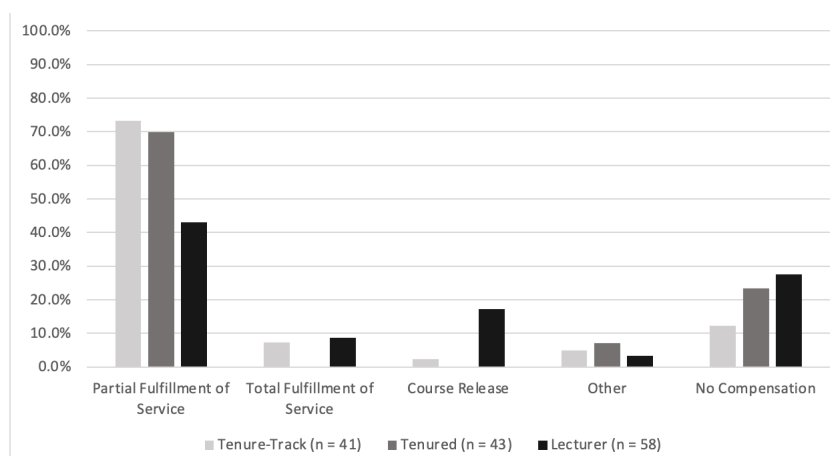
amount of time faculty advisers spent on related duties each week, $r(150) = .249, p < .001$.

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 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 advisors 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 advisors 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 advisors 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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