Pedagogical Approaches to Student-Run PR Firms Using Service Learning: A Case Study

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One way experiential learning can be experienced in a public relations program is through the launching of a public relations student-run agency. This study focuses on a strong example of a student-run PR agency that was launched in a small program on a private university campus. Findings from this case study suggest that student-run agencies can effectively be launched, even with limited resources, to strategically meet program-learning outcomes. Additionally, benefits of student-run agencies include increased prominence of the program within the community, which can provide more internship and networking opportunities for students, as well as stronger pre-professional preparation for students who participate in student-run agencies.

The landscape of higher education is rapidly changing. Faculty face growing numbers of students in courses and increased teaching loads, in conjunction with reduced budgets and fewer resources (Kelderman, 2008; Swanson, 2011; Rampell, 2010). Faculty in programs such as public relations face the additional challenge of the ever-changing technological industries they are preparing their students to enter (Swanson, 2011).

Many faculty have integrated experiential learning into their curriculum in order to prepare students for the professional world (DiPalma, 2013; Swanson, 2008). The development of student-run PR agencies is a growing trend among institutions, allowing students to gain hands-on experience with real-world clients while fulfilling program learning objectives designed to be met by working with actual clients (Bush, 2009; Aldoory & Wringley, 2000; Benigni, Cheng, & Cameron, 2004).

There have been few qualitative studies of student-run firms, but those that have been published focus on the benefits and risks associated with programs such as these in higher education institutions. Bush (2009) suggested that student-run firms "fulfill two critical student-learning needs: process-oriented experiential learning and acquisition of professional skills" (p. 27). Gibson and Rowden (1994) pointed to benefits such as practical experience, increased communication skill acquisition, resume enhancement, networking development and building of portfolio pieces for students. They also stressed, however, that

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there are challenges in operating a student-run firm within a collegiate setting, including limited numbers of qualified students able to participate, the tension with dependability of students and reputation with real-world clients, and stresses with developing the scope and focus of projects. These tensions and struggles, however, may be valuable in the ways they can help programs accomplish learning outcomes in very practical ways. For example, Swanson (2011) found a strong relationship between the launching and development of a student-run agency with the program learning outcomes. Similarly, DiPalma (2013) found that student-run firms can challenge and advance students' understanding of practical sets of skills within the profession.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Program Learning Value of Student-Run PR Agencies

Real-world clients.

One of the strongest values of small programs implementing student-run PR agencies is the opportunity for their students to have robust engagement with real-world clients. The value of working with real-world clients, according to Benigni and Cameron (1999), is that students are able to fully engage in the management and strategic PR cycle required of professionals within the industry. By moving beyond class exercises or research papers, and into actual projects with clients who are expecting measurable results, students are given the opportunity to put their academic training into practice. Additionally, Benigni et al. (2004) showed that when clients are actively involved with the students as they develop their campaigns, there is a higher level of motivation among the students and a greater likelihood that the campaigns developed will actually be implemented by the clients. Aldoory and Wringley (2000) also confirmed that students believe working with real-world clients do a better job at connecting their academic training

with the practical outworking by providing a tangible experience for them to see the theory of public relations put into practice. Working with real-world clients, therefore, prepares students in ways that may otherwise leave them ill equipped for the profession. This is the point Guiniven (1998) made when he said that graduates lack the business and career insight needed in order to enter the profession. Finally, the pedagogical learning through a student-run agency in programs helps reach learning outcomes. Student-run agencies provide students with a safe "professional" educational environment where students can implement their academic theory into public relations based experience.

Experiential learning.

Student-run agencies are natural ways for small programs to incorporate experiential learning. The concept of experiential learning is often tied back to Dewey (1998). Dewey believed that "for knowledge to be usable through recall and application, it has to be acquired in a situation; otherwise it is segregated from experience and is forgotten or not available to transfer to new situations" (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 79). While experiential learning is the concept of connecting an experience to learning, it often takes shape in the form of service learning, where students engage with their local community by using their academic training to serve. The idea of service learning has been advocated for by many educational professionals, such as Boyer (1991) who said the "New American College" is "an institution that celebrates … its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice" (p. A48).

While many definitions or explanations for how service-learning functions are available in academic literature, DiPalma (2013) explained, "[N]o matter how service learning is defined, the organization being served articulates the needs. However, to be academically beneficial, the service must be integral to the learning objectives of the course" ("Literature Review," para. 2). In the context of students working with real-world

clients, Panici and Lasky (2002) suggested that service learning in public relations is an ideal way to apply classroom education to real situations.

Bush (2009) explained that the active learning that takes place within the leadership structure of student-run agencies has a unique way of fulfilling program learning outcomes:

> Students gain experience doing real media pitching, writing, event planning, and other tactical expertise. More important, however, in the more structured agencies, students learn these applications within the context of a professional environment, where they must apply disciplined process and critical thinking to new and continually changing situations. (p. 32)

A student-run agency structure helps achieve the program learning outcome of critical thinking in a way unlike a classroom. Students must be responsive to changing situations with clients and with fellow-staff members. This forces students to connect the theory of public relations strategy and managerial practices into tangible experiences (Bush, 2009).

In light of the previous research that has established the value of service learning and real-world clients for public relations education, as well as the growing interest in using student-run PR firms as a learning environment, this study was designed to explore the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the contribution of experiential learning to program learning outcomes within student-run PR firms?

RQ2. What, if any, additional program benefits can a student-run PR firm provide?

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the launch and development of a student-run PR agency in a private university. The time frame for this case study spans from fall 2010 to the end of fall of 2013. This case study is a particularly strong example of student-run agency's development in a small program through the use of service learning as a key component within the PR curriculum for two reasons: First, it displayed the ways that students can make measurable progress on learning outcomes, identified through the national IDEA student evaluation system. Second, students gained real-world experience through service learning, which allowed them to immerse themselves in the world of PR in a more robust way than was possible within a typical campaigns class. Building on the previous research models, which used only case studies to examine student-run PR firms (Swanson, 2011), this study will explore the ways in which student-run firms have direct connections to student learning and program learning outcomes (Bush, 2009; Aldoory & Wringley, 2000; Benigni et al., 2004).

ANALYSIS

Program Profile

Department and university description. The university has a little less than 6,000 students and was founded in 1908. Located in Journalism & Integrated Media, which was part of the School of Arts & Sciences, the PR emphasis was one of four concentrations available to majors. Students within the program were required to complete 45 units of coursework related to their major. The program has a core of courses that all majors take. The PR emphasis had five courses specifically related to the program, such as Intro to Public Relations, Writing for Public Relations and Advanced Public Relations, as well as two electives that students would take.

In the 2010-2011 school year, there were 35 students declared as PR emphasis, out of the total 160 majors. Over the next three academic years, the department grew to 180 majors, with 60 students in the PR emphasis.

At the time of the launch for the PR student-run agency, fall 2010, there was a full-time faculty member dedicated to each of the other three emphases in the department (Writing & Publishing, Visual Media, and Broadcast News). At the same time, a national search for a full-time faculty member to oversee the PR emphasis was underway. There were four adjunct professors dedicated to helping continue the PR program throughout this search. In the fall of 2011, the adjunct who began the student-run PR agency was hired to be the full-time faculty member for the PR program. This faculty continued to advise and build the student-run agency.

Department program learning outcomes.
The Department of Journalism & Integrated Media had specific learning outcomes related to the industry. These outcomes had strong relationship to those found by Neff, Walker, Smith and Creedon (1999), which included critical thinking and writing skills, practical experience and basic knowledge of the media. In addition, outcomes included the "process and experiential performances" (p. 139) that Neff (2002) identified public relations students needing to achieve in an undergraduate program. The department wanted to ensure that students within the program had opportunity to meet these learning outcomes in practical ways. In order to accomplish this goal, each concentration within the department had a 300-level practicum course. The practicum courses provided hands-on opportunity to develop an understanding of the media by participating in activities with on-campus media such as the student newspaper, magazine and weekly broadcast news program. In addition, the PR practicum section provided students with the opportunity to learn about event management.

Student-Run Agency Development Case Analysis
As of fall 2010, the PR practicum focused solely on event planning for a departmental event. Each fall semester, the PR practicum students were tasked with promoting and running a prospective student event designed to introduce and attract high-school juniors and seniors to the Journalism program. In the spring, the PR practicum focused on the end-of-year department banquet, designed to honor award winners and develop community within the department. In spring 2010, an adjunct instructor was brought in by the department to oversee the implementation of this course and to provide leadership in its development.

Analysis of the content and structure of the course by the adjunct instructor led to the conclusion that the students were being underutilized and the program learning outcomes for PR were not being met. With an average of 20 students enrolled in the course each semester, focusing everyone on a single event for the entire semester led to not only a limited understanding of what practical PR was, but also to a diminished understanding of the strategic communication process for campaigns. In 2006, the Commission on Public Relations Education suggested, "whenever possible, diversify teams and assign clients, case studies or service-learning opportunities that involve diverse groups, issues and organizations" (Turk, p. 49). Therefore, in order to develop a strong academic model for the course, and to better meet the program objectives of connecting knowledge to experience, it was recommended that the practicum course be converted into a PR student-run agency.

Fall 2010 – Spring 2011.
Beginning with fall 2010, the PR practicum course was transitioned into a student-run PR agency, working with both on- and off-campus clients. In the beginning of the agency's development, the faculty member was responsible to find and recruit clients. The faculty member also interviewed and lined up student leaders to perform basic roles within the agency. Roles included Agency Director, Creative Director, and Account Executives. All other students enrolled in the course became staff members for the agency

and were assigned to a specific account. The budget available for the student-run agency was $500 toward the spring semester event with the department. The fall event, designed for prospective students, had no existing budget and functioned on managing a budget based on ticket revenue from attendees. The agency determined to run campaigns on a pro-bono status. This was due to the fact that the goal was to build clients, experience and a good rapport before developing a billing system, as well as the fact that the agency would need to address legal requirements for contracts and billing if they wanted to operate in a paid structure.

The course required students to participate in a PR campaign, through being on either the event campaign team or one of the other client campaign teams. Each student was also required to invest weekly hours into the campaign, as well as turning in a final portfolio documenting their participation via a campaign proposal document at the end of the semester. In addition, each student was required to submit a reflection paper articulating their overall experience, what they learned about public relations, what surprised them about the experience, and what they would recommend as future changes to help the agency be more successful. Participation in class, attendance at team meetings, the final portfolio, and a paper were used to calculate student grades each semester.

The first semester, fall 2010, included one off-campus client and one on-campus client (the department's prospective student event) and had 20 students enrolled in the course. The off-campus client provided the following feedback based on their experience:

> I knew that consulting with students would result in a creative application of what we are hoping to accomplish. I also figured it would include some excellent ideas around Web presence and its importance. What I didn't expect, though, was ability of 6th Street to listen. Application

is great, but application without listening falls flat. That didn't happen with 6th Street. They listened, applied great ideas to the data they were able to gather, and offered some great insights that we are hoping to incorporate into our approach. (6th Street National Affiliation Documents, 2011)

In addition, there was a record number of students at the prospective student departmental fall event, which indicated success by the firm given previous years attendees. Despite this success, however, the leadership within the student-run PR agency had several obstacles when meeting deadlines and reaching professional standards of work, resulting in the faculty member investing significant amounts of time each week working with revisions and mentoring. This is indicative of what Gibson and Rowden (1994) mentioned with finding students who had the skill-level required for the level of work needed in a student-run PR agency. While all team members were required to participate according to the course requirements and grading structure, the level of expertise, dependability and follow-through was not strong. It was determined that a better model of leadership would be needed in order for the student-run PR agency to truly flourish.

In the first semester of being a student-run agency, the course experienced a 33 percent increase in enrollment, up from 15 students enrolled during spring 2010. Additionally, the nationally analyzed IDEA evaluations for the course revealed that students said they felt the course was much better for their learning. On a 5-point scale, the class average moved from rating the class at 3.8 to 4.2. In addition, the IDEA evaluation compares student scores nationally based on the type of class and learning outcomes. Previously the practicum class had been rated similar to other practicum courses, which is in the middle 40 percent of courses nationally. The first semester of it being turned into an agency, students rated it in the "higher" category,

representing the top 30 percent of courses within the IDEA database. In addition to the increased evaluation of learning by students, the community also benefited from the hours invested in service learning. With 20 students enrolled in the class, approximately 900 hours were invested into the community.

The second semester of the agency was in spring 2011. The number of clients doubled, having one off-campus client and three on-campus clients. Additionally, students were eager to join the class with 37 students enrolling. This represented an 85 percent increase from the previous semester. There were also more than 1,500 hours invested by the students this semester into the client campaigns. It also led to the first ongoing off-client relationship for 6th Street.

Fall 2011 – Spring 2013 leadership structure development.

By fall 2011, the clients of the agency expanded to five, including three off-campus organizations. Two of these organizations were global charities and one was a local charity based in downtown Los Angeles. It was in this semester the agency applied for, and received, a PRSSA National Affiliation.

Over the four semesters (fall 2011 and spring 2013), the leadership structure was adjusted to reflect more clarity in roles and responsibilities. Some changes included adding an Assistant Director who would become the Agency Director the following semester. This allowed for greater training and carry-through, not only with client relationships but also with basic agency policies. A Senior Account Executive was also added to assist Account Executives as needed and provide leadership and feedback on campaign elements. In addition to these new roles, leadership training was also introduced beyond the class requirements for those who wanted to hold significant roles within the agency. At the same time, the agency recruited more leaders at the Account Executive level, so they would be able to serve at least four clients a

semester. Figure 1 displays the leadership organization within the agency that was determined to be the best fit (as of spring 2013).
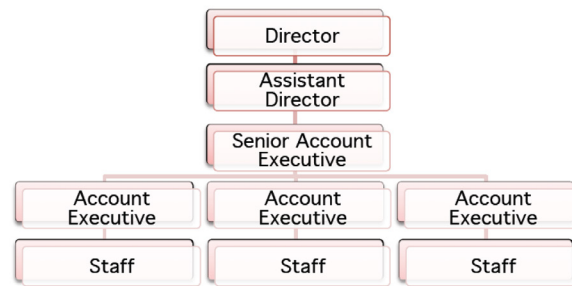

Figure 1. A leadership model for Biola University's student-run PR agency. This model was decided after several semesters of exploring various leadership charts.

In addition to determining an optimized leadership structure, the agency also faced the challenge of dependability among student staff members. Grades alone did not motivate students. Recognizing that the agency was struggling to deliver measurable results to clients and to maintain motivation with staff members who were interested in the agency, the faculty decided it would be best to make the student-run agency a separate group from the practicum class.

Fall 2012 – Spring 2014 class/agency separation process.

Over three semesters (fall 2012-fall 2013), a process was launched to formally separate the course (JOUR 300) from the agency. The first semester (fall 2012) allowed students to be part of the agency without having to be in the course. This was the first step toward establishing a staff base beyond required participation within the curriculum. The agency had 3 students who chose to be in the agency but not the class. During this semester additional structures were put into place to ensure the development of the agency staff. All executive leadership (the Director, Assistant Director and Account Executives) met weekly for one hour. In addition, the entire agency staff would meet weekly for one hour. Finally, various campaign teams would meet weekly for one hour. Five clients were served by the firm during

this semester. One was an on-campus client, two were local clients, one was a regional client and one was a global non-profit client.

In spring 2013, students in the course were no longer automatically staff of the agency, but rather had to go through an application and interview process to join the agency. At this point, most staff members were students outside of the course. In addition, the staff started to diversify, including students from the School of Business and the Department of Communication. In response to challenges students had making three separate meetings a week, the agency moved to combining the leadership, group and all staff meetings, making it so the first half of the meeting was staff updates and training, and the second half would be account executives working with their staff as leadership moved from group to group to assist. The one-hour, weekly leadership meetings, which took place in addition to the staff/team meeting, continued to be a core part to the development of the agency. This semester the firm served four clients. Three clients were from the local community and one was an on-campus client. The client needs ranged from brand awareness, events, to community relations. This was the last semester the practicum course and the student-run agency had an existing connection.

Fall 2013 marked the first semester that the agency was officially separated from the class. All staff training and development was conducted by the agency faculty adviser and agency student-leadership. Interviews and applications were a requirement for all staff. The firm served four clients, one of which was developing a campaign for itself. This process was particularly important for the firm as it set about trying to build its own staff base and brand on campus apart from any curriculum requirement or support within the department. By this point, the student-run agency had invested more than 6,000 hours of service into the community. If this work had been provided at the minimum wage of $8.00/hour, which is typically much lower than what

would actually be charged for these services, 6th Street would have earned $48,000.

While separating the agency from the class structure, additional training for leaders also became necessary. Particularly because the agency no longer had a set meeting time as a class, it was essential to have leaders regularly connect and be trained as effective managers. Agency staff and leadership met for an hour each week. Additionally, leaders met for thirty minutes to an hour each week. These meetings met a need within the agency to have effective communication, accountability and professional development among the staff. Additionally, the agency director meets weekly with the faculty staff adviser in order to collaborate on agency focus, report on client issues and discuss staff issues.

As of spring 2014, the agency had worked with 18 clients ranging from global and national charities to local businesses to on-campus initiatives. The agency also had five campaigns that were multi-semester or recurring. Students had participated in client pitches remotely using software such as go-to-meeting, in-person meetings with top management from clients, and in live campaign events such as a red-carpet premier. The clients represented a variety of campaign needs and types as well as a robust selection of organizations, representing different missions and sizes.

The growth of this student-run agency and the process to refine the leadership structure, student learning, and client variety is a strong case study for small programs. This student-run agency was built with little budget (less than $500 a semester) and through the work of a single faculty member. This case provides valuable insight into small programs that want to provide an agency-experience for their students.

DISCUSSION

Program Learning Outcomes
The agency produced several benefits for the PR students with the program. First, students who

participated within the agency developed strong portfolio pieces that resulted in greater internship opportunities and job placement. One of the course learning outcomes that was measured through the PR Practicum class was "Developing skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field." In fall 2012 and spring 2013, the last two semesters where the practicum and student-run agency were connected, the national IDEA evaluations used a 5-point scale to show the average rating for how much progress students believed they made on this particular objective. In fall 2012 it was rated at 4.6 as an adjusted average nationally with 85 percent of the students rating it at either a 4 or a 5. For spring 2013, it was rated at 4.6 as an adjusted average nationally with 100 percent of the students rating it at either a 4 or a 5 for their learning progress. This indicates that the focus of the student-run agency to provide experiential learning that tangibly connected their knowledge with practice was effectively reached through this pedagogical approach (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 79).

Program Benefits
Departments and degrees that utilize student-run agencies may experience benefits to several facets of the program including in areas such as student learning and in the reputation of their educational value as a program.

Student learning.
Students who participated within the student-run agency also performed better in situations that required oral presentations. Compared to students who had not participated in the student-run agency, students exhibited more comfort with interacting with clients, presenting campaign ideas in limited times (in pitches) and developing strategic solutions. The skills students gained within the agency setting mirrored what the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) expressed employers are looking for in key skills for new hires. NACE advocated that

"One of the keys to finding the right job at graduation is to have experience in your field. Internships or a cooperative education program will add considerable value to your resume" (2014, p. 6). In addition, working in a team setting on strategic client projects that involve problem solving accentuates students' skills to future employers. On a 5-point scale, NACE (2014, p. 4) found that the top skill quality employers desired was:

1. the ability to work on a team structure (weighted average of 4.55);
2. the ability to make decisions and solve problems (weighted average of 4.50);
3. the ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work (weighted average of 4.48);
4. the ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization (weighted average of 4.48);
5. the ability to obtain and process information (weighted average of 4.37).

These are top desired sets of skills that student-run agencies build and refine within staff members. As students and institutions become more future-focused, emphasizing job placement after graduation in addition to relative progress on learning outcomes, this benefit of a student-run agency is particularly helpful for the goals of small programs.

Program brand.
Another benefit that was a result of the development of this agency was the branding for the PR program. Faculty in small programs often face challenges of trying to help gain a reputation in the community, network with organizations for opportunities for internships and jobs, and maintain active teaching and research projects. The student-run agency resulted in organizations reaching out to the PR program asking if any students were interested in interning. In addition, when students would meet with clients for pitches or to implement campaign elements, students regularly received business cards and offers for mentoring or meetings. This added value of

the student-run agency led to a stronger brand for the program within the community, attracted the attention of prospective students (and their parents), and provided a differential compared to other programs in the area that would not have been possible without the agency.

Evaluation of student-run agency.

The overall goal of the practicum course had been to provide students with tangible ways to connect academic preparation to practical experience. While the PR practicum class accomplished this in a limited way, the development of the student-run agency allowed for a more robust experience for students. Rather than focusing only on events, students learned about a variety of PR activities. Students learned to apply their learning in changing environments by working with clients. In addition, the student-run agency resulted in students who were better prepared, offered more opportunities through internships, as well as increased branding for the department within the local community due to the experiential learning and service to the community through the agency.

One measurement of effectiveness is the fact that the agency received PRSSA's National Affiliation by fall 2011, only three semesters after the agency began. This shows that an external review of the learning, client service, and activity of the agency met national standards. Beyond this, however, is the measurement that students served 18 national, regional and local clients on a variety of campaigns. Client feedback regularly cited not only appreciation for the service of the students, but notable comments regarding the students' expertise and professionalism in delivering services. This is a key area, as true service learning is designed to not only benefit students (as illustrated by the progress on learning and course outcomes, as well as acquired skills) but also serve the community in tangible ways (Kim, 2013).

Recommendations

Launching a student-run firm is a large undertaking, particularly in small programs. However, while the initial investment, particularly in time by the faculty adviser, is substantial, the results for the program and student learning can be quite significant. This case study provides insight into several key considerations.

Faculty time investment and connections.

Often, particularly in the beginning stages of a student-run agency, the faculty member is required to put in a lot of time. From walking students through strategic processes, helping them prepare pitches and training them on developing professional campaigns, the hours can add up quickly. It is helpful to consider connecting the student-run agency to a course to help account for hours. While the agency may outgrow a class setting, as was the case with this example, it was beneficial for the faculty member to have part of the course load dedicated to the development of the agency.

In addition, when the agency is very new, it may be difficult to find off-campus clients. While the student leaders within the agency eventually become trained at recruiting their own clients, faculty are often tasked with this in the early stages. It is helpful for a faculty member to be well-connected to the community where the PR program is in order to identify clients who would be good fits for a student-run agency. Key areas a faculty member needs to consider are not only organizations' willingness to work with students, and to be interactive with them, but also the scope of the project the organizations hope students will undertake. It often falls to the faculty member who is helping launch a student-run agency to help manage expectations of clients so it is a reasonable goal for the students.

Student leadership and staff.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects to the student-run agency is the development of staff. Bush (2009) and Swanson (2011) both pointed

out the value of students who are able to effectively lead teams and manage projects. Students, however, do not simply come into PR programs ready for such a level of responsibility. The faculty member should consider in what ways the student-run agency will develop leaders. If the agency is connected to a class, leadership training and development can be a part of the lecture and curriculum projects. However, if it grows beyond a class, as was the case with this example, it is essential to develop strategic leadership development opportunities. Ways that this can be accomplished could be by having weekly meetings with the Agency Director, as was done with the agency in this study, as well as specifically having leadership development for all agency leadership throughout the year. Concepts to cover include the elements of PR, but also leadership principles, billing and accountability, conflict resolution and team management.

Limitations & Future Research

Due to the research design of this study (case study), this study is not an appropriate design to make general applications to student-run firms nationally. While it can provide insight and helpful recommendations, it is limited in its ability to speak to the national landscape of student-run firms. In addition to the methodological limitations, this study also examines a specific kind of student-run firm, that which was designed within a curriculum. There are numerous other methods of running and maintaining student-run firms across the country. This study does not address those other methods.

Future research could build upon this and previous studies, but looking at a larger cross-section of student-run firms. This would provide the opportunity to make larger applications to the overall status of student-run firm education as well as incorporating various approaches to student-run firms on university campuses.

Conclusion

The public relations industry has criticized PR education as delivering students who are unprepared for the profession, lacking in critical thinking and professional experiences (Guiniven, 1998; Bush 2009). In response to this problem, programs across the country have implemented projects with real-world clients and service learning (Swanson, 2011; DiPalma, 2013; Aldoory & Wrigley, 2000). Launching student-run agencies has proven to be a strategic way for programs to meet their learning outcomes in relation to critical thinking, oral presentation, and practical experience (Swanson, 2011; Swanson, 2008; Bush, 2009).

This case study illustrated how, even in a small program, it is possible to develop a strong student-run agency that provides benefits for the department, students and community. Many programs can feel stretched and uncertain about the investment a student-run agency requires from faculty and resources (Swanson, 2011; Axtell, 2003). However, by connecting a student-run agency, at least in the early stages, to the practicum or lab-based course, faculty are able to invest time within the confines of their regular commitment to teaching. Additionally, with careful focus on budgeting, student-run agencies can operate with few resources. The agency in this case study had no budget available outside of $500 dedicated to the spring department event. There were also no offices, computers or storage available. However, public relations is very mobile. Students were able to use digital resources to share files. They met in common locations and reserved conference rooms to pitch to clients on campus. Despite these limitations, the agency grew, developed leadership and had clients who repeatedly expressed their appreciation for their professionalism and expertise.

This case study is a strong example for programs in today's higher education environment. Even in a small program, the agency was able to launch even before a full-time PR faculty person was part of the department. In addition,

lack of space and funding did not prevent the agency from being effective. Within a matter of semesters, it had achieved national affiliation and worked with several high-profile clients. After the agency was more established, the program reaped further benefits by finding organizations inquiring about interns and potential job openings, which is a significant benefit for programs.

The industry of public relations has a high expectation of college graduates. They anticipate strong written and oral capabilities, the ability to be a strong contributor to teams, and critical thinking skills that can apply theory to practical situations in an ever-changing landscape. Coursework alone cannot achieve this level of expectation. This is exactly what Dewey meant when he said learning that is "segregated from experience" will be forgotten and not applied to new situations (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 79). The implementation of a student-run agency is one way programs can reap the benefits of having students participate in service learning activities while connecting those client relationships directly to program learning outcomes.

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