2016 Winter Review

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About Us

Who we are...

We are the James S. Measell Chapter of PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America), created in 1983 on the campus of Wayne State University.

Our mission...

Our mission is to provide guidance, motivation and opportunity to upcoming public relations professionals in the city of Detroit.

What we do...

We create programming and opportunities so students can keep pace with the ever-changing industry of PR. Our workshops compliment our classroom studies, our tours give us insight into potential careers, our shared events with PR professionals help us build networks and our executive board positions teach us leadership skills.
Dear PRSSA members,

It is hard to believe that the 2015-16 school year is already coming to an end. I started my position last summer with hopes of bringing growth and value to an organization that has helped me build my future career in PR. However, I could have never imagined celebrating as many successes as we have shared together.

I am absolutely honored to be associated with this Chapter, let alone to be among the many talented and driven individuals who’ve helped develop our Chapter into what it has become. We have many challenges as a commuter-based campus with members balancing school, work and internships. Yet, we still managed to grow our member-base, increase engagement, earn the respect of professionals and professional organizations and receive national recognition among 300+ Chapters across the nation.

Of all our accomplishments, the one I am most proud of is watching our new members discover their passion for PR and flourish in both the program and the organization. I am absolutely astounded with the level of talent and professionalism that the Wayne State University PR program produces.

Thank you for allowing me to be your President and to serve on your executive board for the 2015-16 school year. I look forward to what each of you will bring to the PR profession.

Sincerely,
Amanda Knaebel
Professionals in the business, marketing and PR industries have used portfolios to showcase their work for many years. Showing off your prized press releases, campaigns and artwork can land you the job of your dreams more often than simply telling a prospective employer about your skills. For students graduating in the 21st century, creating a compelling e-portfolio is the one item you must master upon entering the workforce.

Your first step is to procure a website to host your e-portfolio. You can purchase a domain name and hosting server, or you can get one for free from advertising-rich sites like wix.com, weebly.com or Wordpress. A free site will work for a student, but if you are seeking a professional job, I would advise you to spring for a custom domain.

The next step is to digitize those documents you spent days creating for your demanding professors. Invest in a scanner and put those student projects, papers, service-learning documents and relevant professional material into PDF format. Make sure you actually take your professor’s advice and correct the errors. You’ve paid tens of thousands of dollars for that degree… you might as well have something that will help you land a job to pay off those loans.

After you choose your web host and your files are digitized and organized, you’re ready to start creating your masterpiece. Your e-portfolio should portray who you are as a person as well as your professional skills. So make sure it conveys the message you want employers to understand. It is okay to be unique, but always remain professional. Employers want to see who you are, as importantly as the quality of your work.

Be sure that your site is easy to follow, contains a variety of work and does not contain dead links. Nothing will turn an employer off more quickly than reaching an error page when clicking on a button for a PDF of an article you wrote. Do your due-diligence and check every single link.

New media is not just the future. New media is right now. As digital natives, you’re expected to know how to function in today’s digital world. This skill is not an elective; it’s a prerequisite for survival in today’s workforce. Your e-portfolio is the employer’s window into your education, experience and ultimately, what you have to offer them as a PR professional.
Empowering a Generation of Leadership at the PRSSA 2016 National Assembly

By Rebecca Cooper

Over 175 delegates and non-delegates from across the country and the world gathered in Austin, Texas for the PRSSA 2016 National Assembly. This year’s National Assembly took place, March 3–7, with the purpose of strengthening Chapter leadership through relevant sessions and electing the PRSSA 2016–2017 National Committee.

Day-of Competition

The Day-of Competition is an hour long professional development exercise that requires students to collaborate as a team and create a public relations campaign in a realistic context. This year’s client was the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Southern. Competing teams created and pitched communications plans to promote World Tennis Day and UTSA Rally the Family campaign. The first place team demonstrated their deep understanding of the USTA Southern publics along with appropriate metrics and evaluation. The winning team was announced at the welcome reception and each member won $50 and a certificate.

Leadership Training Sessions

An important goal of Assembly is equipping student leaders with tools and information they can bring home to their respective Chapters. Public relations professionals and participants engaged in discussion-based breakout sessions, covering a variety of topics including resource and transition training, personal and professional branding and uplifting future Chapter leaders. Key takeaways included:

“Who you are as a person drives who you are as a professional.” — Don Egle, MBA, APR, ABC

“If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room.” — Bonnie Upright, APR.

Members should take advantage of the thousands of dollars in scholarships and awards offered at the national level. Only three percent of the Society’s members applied for monetary awards last year. Adopt a mentorship program in your Chapter to empower emerging leaders. Grow your membership and cultivate Chapter inclusivity by employing outreach beyond public relations students.

The day wrapped up with a speech and Q&A session with Brandy King, communications director and spokesperson for Southwest Airlines. Brandy King called attention to the growing threat of cyber terrorism and stressed the need for effective crisis communication in a world increasingly more volatile than ever before.

National Assembly Meeting

125 delegates elected the Society’s National Committee. Candidates presented speeches followed by a Q&A period. This year, Assembly delegates also deliberated and passed a bylaw amendment increasing national annual dues from $50 to $55, under the provision that the affiliate program dues remain the same at $65 per year. The increase takes effect fall 2016.

Farewell Keynote

David Grossman, APR, ABC, Fellow PRSA, founder and CEO of The Grossman Group started the Assembly’s farewell meeting with a riveting keynote, highlighting the importance of leading with authenticity. Attendees received copies of his inspirational new book, “No Cape Needed.” The PRSSA 2016 National Conference Committee concluded the event with a preview of what members can expect this Oct. 21–25 in Indianapolis. The registration deadline for the National Conference is Friday, Sept. 16.

Attending the Assembly was undoubtedly the most transformative and impactful experience I’ve had as a PRSSA member. It was an incredible honor to be a Chapter delegate among the brightest and most promising next generation of PR all-stars. Beyond the LinkedIn connections and Twitter followers, I returned to my home in Detroit with new friends from across the globe, a sharpened toolbox of leadership skills, and the knowledge and resources needed to grow and improve an already-wonderful Chapter at Wayne State University. Make it your mission to attend a National Assembly. You won’t regret the rewarding opportunity.
Wayne State alumnus, Jeffrey Adkins and Amy Lafnear visited the Macomb campus, Tuesday, March 15 to speak with Dr. Najor’s fundamentals class on what it is like to be public relation practitioners. Throughout the presentation, the guest speakers shared with the class their typical routines and responsibilities, what they could expect entering into the field of public relations as well as some tips that could be beneficial to the students’ success. While Jeffrey works in the corporate offices at Henry Ford Hospital, Amy works for SirenPR, a small but mighty agency firm consisting of three other women.

Jeffrey Adkins works internal communications for Henry Ford Hospital, and starts every Monday morning sending a mass email consisting of news updates and key information to his fellow co-workers. Because this email is sent to roughly 80,000 people, it is crucial for Adkins to use perfect grammar. Around ten in the morning, he participates in a conference call with the social media team to discuss and analyze successful vs. unsuccessful business posts. On the social media team, each member rotates being “on call” and must respond to the notifications and messages from the public in order to maintain effective relations. From eleven in the morning until noon, Adkins’ time is spent writing news articles for Henry Ford’s webpage and newsletter. The topics for these articles normally revolve around the good work the hospital is involved with, such as new information provided by health science research.

Adkins explained to the class the DAISY award, where employees are nominated and one is chosen for a feature length article. This helps to build morale for the employees and is a nice way to honor individuals who go above and beyond expectations. When Adkins returns from lunch, he spends the rest of the day prepping ongoing projects.

A practitioner who carries out PR for a corporation means that he or she has more of an intimate relationship with that one specific company, as opposed to those who choose to work for an agency that is accountable for numerous clients. Lafnear’s typical Monday looks slightly different that of Adkins’. SirenPR currently handles fifteen different clients, such as Brome Burgers and Shakes, Community Choice Credit Union, Early Explorers Academy, Detroit Bikes, Rochester College, and Yogurtopia. Lafnear handles five of the fifteen clients SirenPR has. While keeping in contact with the agency leaders, she works on deliverable outcomes to show her clients.

Those who work for a corporate company usually get paid salary, but in agency, there is either one of two ways in which the practitioner receives payment. A retainer is when the client agrees to pay a specific amount of money for a certain amount of hours worked. This is how payments are issued at SirenPR. Billable hours are when the practitioner is worth a specific amount per hour. Regardless of which way the practitioner receives payment, those who work agency must keep track of their hours. While doing so, Lafnear explained how many young professionals would say they’ve worked fewer hours in fear of being ridiculed for spending too much time on a specific project or client. Lafnear said, “It is necessary for young professionals to accurately report the time they spend on tasks so agency leadership and clients have a clear understanding and realistic expectations for work being
On Wednesday, February 24, Wayne State’s PRSSA coordinated a LinkedIn Resume Workshop. Five professionals who hire in the public relations field were invited to share tips on how to get noticed in marketing ourselves for landing an internship or getting a job after graduation. Carly Getz (Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan), Ann Marie Fortunate (Franco Public Relations), Ashleigh Chatel (LE&A-Lambert, Edwards & Associates), Melanie Shaw and Morgan Silver (Aerotek) enlightened us with their knowledge of hiring and recruiting for their organizations.

The first rule to resume writing is to cut them down in length. It’s crucial to remember this when trying to get a job in PR. You have learned to be short and concise with your writing, and your resume should reflect this ability. Make sure your resume is tailored to the job for which you are applying. You can often display these items in short bullets. Remember, make it simple and concise. It is beneficial to highlight what you have learned in school, especially if you have not done an internship or are currently applying for one. If you have had an internship or work experience, add that to your resume. Do not provide references. If they are needed, they will be requested.

The professionals agreed that they do not always look for an objective, but if it is there, it needs to be really good. Never include a photograph of yourself on your resume. Employers will find out what you look like when they google you. If you are concerned about what will be found on the internet, they recommend you to go to www.brandyourself.com to manage your online reputation or create a better online presence. They mentioned looking beyond the first Google search page as well. Also, it is very important to use a professional email address. A safe email to use is “your name@” whatever service you choose.

You will be looked up on LinkedIn more often than not, so the above information provided should be relevant on your LinkedIn account, as well. They advised creating a LinkedIn account that highlights key words of your dream job with your qualifications. Often, these same highlighted words are the key words employers are searching for to hire. Recruiters will review your connections on LinkedIn, and will often contact them to ask questions about you. Keep this in mind when accepting people to connect with on LinkedIn. Remember, it is a completely different platform than Facebook.

Link with past employers, those you have done group projects with and individuals who can vouch for your good work ethics. Have them include reviews on your platform page and include your published work, interests, volunteer work and a resume. Make sure your resume prints correctly when viewed from both email and LinkedIn. This proves that you pay attention to details.

The professional consensus is that the most important aspect of getting a job in public relations is to create relationships. If a recruiter or someone from PR messages you, respond with interest. Ask to grab coffee. Conversely, if you reach out to someone in the field you are interested in, ask them to grab a coffee. Putting a real face and personality to a resume or LinkedIn account puts you ahead of the game. So go polish your resume and LinkedIn profile and grab coffee with someone new.

By Jen Hope

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The Tale Of Our City: PR’s Role in Detroit’s Revitalization

Thank you to all of the attendees, committee members, volunteers, speakers and panelists. Hosting our Chapter’s very first Regional Conference in collaboration with Michigan State’s PRSSA was an incredible achievement for us this past semester. The Chapter would like to extend an extra-special thank you to both Catia Sabak and Danielle Homic for all of your hard work in the planning process that made the conference such a wonderful experience!
What a Crisis can Mean in Public Relations

By Kyle Taylor

During the regional conference this past March, Dean Matthew Seeger’s talk on crisis communication informed attendees that crisis isn’t going anywhere, anytime soon. Unfortunately in today’s age, crises happen frequently and are a central part of the public relations practice. However, Seeger stated that with crisis comes opportunity, specifically for public relations practitioners.

The fact is that crisis is happening more than ever before and with a greater impact than ever. Most of our understanding of the topic comes from the narratives of those who have lived through them. Communication plays a critical role in regards to effectively handling a crisis and this creates a need for professionals who are trained in how to deal with a variety of crises.

For companies, the event of a crisis can be a sink or swim moment. Consequences for companies often consist of reputational damage, lost market-share, lost stock value, damaged careers or even consumers being harmed. This is where the opportunity can come into the picture, because not only do negative consequences happen as a result of a crisis, positive consequences can also occur, too. When handling a crisis effectively, pr practitioners have the chance to make the company extremely visible, renew the company’s reputation, develop new stakeholder relationships and implement opportunities for change.

As future PR practitioners, it is our responsibility to always remember to be ethical when a crisis is concerned. Be honest, open and frank when discussing issues, especially in front of the media and consumers. Keep in mind to always communicate with passion, concern and empathy. You could be the reason a company survives through something as serious as a product recall because of food contamination. Remember, it is of vital importance to practice ethical public relations tactics in all areas of our career, but especially when dealing with issues that have the potential for wide impact.
Five Pro-Tips to Live by

By Gretchen Maurer

Ever since I attended the Finn Partners agency tour, I was anticipating Katy Cockrel’s keynote speech at the regional conference. She shared her story of how she ended up at Finn and the twists and turns that brought her there. She left us with five professional tips to live by:

1. “Get that hands-on experience as much as you can in different sectors.”
2. “Wrap your head around the fact you will always have to do the grunt work.”
3. “Get out of Detroit and gain some perspective.”
5. “Never stop learning.”

Each one of these can be translated into my life, and I could go on about how I would not be where I am if I didn’t take a few risks and a leap of faith here and there. However, hearing Katy speak made me feel that I was doing everything right and that I am onto great things. Not only did she mention how often we as students should listen to our advisors and mentors and that Shelly knows what she is talking about, but that the learning continues even after you leave the classroom.

Cockrel broke down the reality of the world of PR. As much as we all wish we lived glamorous lives like Samantha Jones or Olivia Pope, it is actually far from that. Leading back to her second tip, even as we all work our way up the career ladder, no job should ever be beneath you. Everyone is working toward a common goal and simply wants the team to succeed. Do what you can to achieve all the goals you are reaching for.

Almost every single one of her tips relates back to how important it is to get out of our comfort zones. Taking a job or an internship in another state, starting school over again, choosing a program that you are passionate about and not one that is safe... You never truly know what you are capable of until you leave the safety of your comfort zone and take a few risks.
The Tale of Our City: PR’s Role in Detroit’s Revitalization, the regional conference hosted by Michigan State and Wayne State University’s PRSSA chapters, boasted an impressive agenda of well-seasoned professionals. An opportunity students had during the conference was to sit in on a panel discussing the various paths the PR world allows us to take on after graduating because while the automotive industry is huge in our city, there is much more Detroit has to offer.

The hosted dialogue, “Career Development: PR Industry Options,” had an all-star panel who were eager to discuss Detroit’s growing markets and where we stand on reaching our fantasy jobs in our dream industry. Moderated by Tina Kozak, president of Franco PR Group, Andy Hetzel, vice president of corporate communications of Blue Cross Blue Shield, Max Muncey, PR manager of the North American International Auto Show, Paul Riser, managing director of technology-based entrepreneurship of TechTown Detroit, and Monica Cheick, account director of PublicCity all joined in on the hour-long discussion. The panel discussed tactics they found to be most important on finding our interests and attaining our career goals.

Do your Research

... and never stop. Research the industry, research the organizations within the industry and research the professionals in those organizations. Is it time-consuming? Sure, but it will ensure you are prepared and can visualize yourself in the specific industry’s setting. Be mindful that your researched plan might look good on paper, but might not be the right fit in person. This is where interning comes into play. Apply and try. As Andy Hetzel said, “Internships are like dating. You are testing the companies out to see how you like them.”

Be Motivated

It all comes down to having the drive and determination to reach your dreams. Make the time to show up at networking events, even if you’re tired and it’s the last thing you want to do. Spend the extra five minutes sending a LinkedIn request with a little message attached. Fit in time every couple of weeks to reconnect with your network and say hello. Paul Riser shared what really shows true drive and will set us apart is not only taking internships, but also volunteering. All the small touches you do now will help set you apart later.

Be Open-Minded

Tina Kozak said it best: “Yes, you can work in an industry you want. However, be open-minded.” The truth of the matter is our interests might change as we keep growing both personally and professionally. Do not burn bridges along the way because you won’t think the relationship will matter later on. I’m pretty sure any of the panel’s professionals, or any professionals for that matter, will agree those relationships will always matter. You never want the ones you burned to come back to bite you.
On Feb 18, my fellow public relations students and I gathered together to tour one of the top news outlets in Michigan, The Detroit News. After waiting patiently in the lobby for several minutes, we were greeted by Walter Middlebrook, the assistant managing editor. He escorted us to the room where all the editors would soon have their meeting. “Boring as all heck, but you wanted to see it,” said Mr. Middlebrook jokingly. But we were filled with excitement and curiosity. Within a couple of minutes, the room was filled with editors prepared to discuss potential stories for each of their sections. Whether it was sports, business or features, there seemed to be a general trend in how they determined whether or not a story should be published.

The meeting room was buzzing with questions like; “Do we really need another story about…?” or “How significant is this?” Hearing all of these questions reminded me of the basics we all learned in theory during the fundamentals of public relations class. It’s incredibly comforting knowing that the things we have learned in class are in practice in the professional world.

One of the major challenges we will face as public relations professionals is getting our stories published. Unless we have a high-profile client, it can be difficult to achieve newsworthiness. However, fear not. After attending this tour at The Detroit News, I learned that there are several ways to make even the most ordinary stories newsworthy.

Is it new or unique?

Even with high-profile clients or national crises, at some point people stop being interested or no longer feel the need to learn more about the topic. For example, the crisis in Flint, MI is still an ongoing issue for the locals, and while it dominated news cycles for weeks, it is no longer frequently reported.

Is it controversial?

The more controversial a story is, the more likely it will garner attention from the masses. In the age of social media, everyone feels empowered to utilize various outlets to voice their thoughts. If a story is controversial you better believe everyone will be putting in their two cents.

Is it significant?

Why should people care about your story? Is it relevant to their lives? Significance is making people believe that the story is important and has near-immediate impact on their lives. This includes making sure that the story is timely and has relevance to the readers of the news source to which you are pitching.

Is it interesting?

Even if your story does not have any of the characteristics above, it can still be newsworthy if it is something that is just plain interesting. If you’re banking on this characteristic to spread your story, make sure it evokes strong emotions, like fear, anger or excitement.

Remember to constantly examine the relevant media outlets around you to find what they deem important and relevant. With the knowledge of the characteristics that make something newsworthy in your arsenal, you are one step closer to being the best PR professional you can be!
A New Conversation for a New Auto Industry

By Stacey Kendall

Communications professionals gathered at the Valeo North American headquarters in Troy, Michigan on a snowy February morning to hear from top auto executives. The panel discussion, "Re-Igniting Communications for a New Auto Industry", focused on how auto companies are communicating in the post-bailout era.

The event was co-hosted by the Detroit chapters of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The panelists agreed that the advent of social media has been the biggest change to auto communications. But they were quick to note that while the application has changed, the profession's core remains the same.

"Writing is still number one," said James Fisher, director of corporate communications for Visteon Corporation. "You should be the best storyteller around," added Curt McAllister, Midwest public relations manager of Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A.

As the responsibilities of PR professionals have increased with the up-to-the-minute news cycle and the viral nature of the Internet that keeps communicators on their toes, the panelists shared how they prioritize the many hats they wear. Peter Ternes, who recently retired from General Motors as the senior communications strategist, quickly replied that the customer should be at the center of everything an organization does. A company that is still licking its wounds from the aftermath of the largest recall in auto history, GM had to learn the hard way that people should always be number one.

"If you turn your back on the customer for a second, you turn your back on the business," said Ternes. While Apple and Google are often described as auto industry disrupters for competing to produce autonomous vehicles, Tony Sapienza, the communications director of Faurecia, works to change the negative narrative.

He described the tech companies as contributors to the innovative direction in which the industry is already headed. Sapienza argued that just as the auto industry's role in creating technology for the artificial heart was seen as a valued contribution. Much of the same of can be said about Silicon Valley's place in the world of making driverless vehicles.

During the Q&A session, the panelists gave candid insights into what it's really to like work in auto communications. One audience member asked, "What do you hate about working in the auto industry?"

Ternes smiled with a rhetorical response. "How much time do we have?"

Courtney Zemke and Christiana Lumaj attend a panel at Valeo.
On March 1, I was pleased to attend the Edelman Trust Breakfast with fellow PRSSA members at Andiamo. Starting off with a great cup of coffee in hand, I was excited to hear about the idea of trust from industry professionals including Tony Ambroza, senior vice president of Carhartt Inc., Dr. Caleb Siefert, associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan Dearborn and Keven Cook, COO of Edelman Chicago. The event was moderated by Susannah Wesley-Ahlschwede, senior vice president of Edelman.

Having trust in the company that you are buying products or services from is more important than ever, and in the long run, distrust can hurt the company. Those who have trust in the company are more likely to share positive online reviews, make recommendations to others, defend the company and ultimately, pay more for products.

Overall, people want to have trust in a brand, and the products or services that it can provide. With the exception of technology companies, not many people can name a company’s CEO. Without having a face to associate with the company, there is less trust. The personal values of the CEO make a difference in trust. If you share similar values, you will trust the CEO and as a result, you will have trust in the company.

All of the panelists provided insights on being authentic to your publics. Companies who partner with other companies or celebrities need to do it in a genuine way. If it comes off that the person endorsing the product is only doing so for the paycheck, people will see that, and the company will lose credibility. Choosing a celebrity endorsement needs to be done strategically. The values of the celebrity should match those of the company. Just because there is a celebrity endorsing your product, it does not mean that it is guaranteed to work. They need to be honest, truly like the brand and not just be jumping on the latest celebrity bandwagon.

Today, earned media is more trusted than paid advertising. However, Dr. Siefert touched on a Super Bowl commercial study about how people responded to different advertisements, and which ones were being re watched. According to the study, 53 percent of people watch the Super Bowl for the advertisements. The ones that stick with people and are being re-watched and shared, are those that are genuine and honest. People react to emotions. In 2016, one of the more popular commercials was for the new Jeep Patriot. It told people who Jeep is as a company. It went back and told its story, which really built trust in Jeep for consumers.

The main takeaway is to be honest with your publics. If you are genuine and authentic in what you are doing as a company, people will take notice and will be more likely to put their trust in you.
A Student Perspective on the Flint Water Crisis

By Rebecca Cooper

This is a compelling time to study public relations at a major university in the State of Michigan. We are at the epicenter of one of the largest municipal water tragedies in modern American history. The Flint Water Crisis may have been created through political means, but it now transcends politics. Every communication professional in any field should be plugged into what is happening in Flint as it will serve as the ultimate case study in crisis management and communication strategy.

In March 2014, under the governance of the state-appointed emergency manager, Darnell Early, Flint transferred its water source from the Detroit water system to the highly polluted Flint River. The infrastructure of Flint is old, with most households using lead service lines. The Flint River corrosive water stripped lead from the service pipes, delivering lead and other contaminants into Flint’s drinking water.

The result of changing Flint’s water source was lead poisoning the city’s residents, including the city’s children. It is estimated that eight people have died from water-contaminated related medical issues and that number is sure to increase. The long term residual effects of this human catastrophe have yet to be quantified, but we do know this, communication plays an integral role in preventing and defusing a crisis.

I did not wholly understand the magnitude of the Flint Water Crisis until I volunteered as a research assistant with Wayne State University’s Department of Civil Engineering. Under the leadership of Professor Shawn McIlmurry, we tested and surveyed water quality in dozens of selected Flint households.

The last time I was in Flint, I was nine years old competing in a YMCA swim meet. Strangely, the chlorine levels you’d find in a public swimming pool were not far off from the chlorine levels we tested from the average Flint kitchen faucet. Not surprisingly, many of the residents complained of unbearably-itchy skin after showering, symptoms usually associated with high chlorine levels in pools and hot tubs.

For a few Flint residents, our mere presence in these homes provided a glimmer of hope in a time of despair and confusion. Many had not heard anything from the government. Many seemed concerned and uniformed. Many were outraged. A few mothers had me examine the rashes on their children, looking to me for medical advice. I was not equipped with useful information for these residents. In fact, it appeared as if nobody had any information for these residents. Every Flint home we went into was different from the other. PR 101 tells us we need to understand our publics. Keeping this in mind, we must be careful of the sweeping generalizations that several media outlets have used to describe the context of the city. “Flint is poor.” “Flint is uneducated.” These generalizations are not only inflammatory and dehumanizing, but are simply incorrect. What is happening in Flint is very much a human crisis. When the victims of a crisis are negatively portrayed, we subliminally rationalize the wrongdoings of those who should be held accountable. These rationalizations also jeopardize our ability to identify effective communication solutions needed to help solve this crisis.

So, where do we go from here? How do we disseminate pertinent information to a demographic of people so far-reaching and so diverse? How can we restore public confidence? We must first realize this crisis calls for the most comprehensive and multi-faceted public relations campaigns we may ever see. All hands must be on deck. From the federal, state and local governments to schools, medical organizations, businesses, religious institutions and beyond. Every single resident of Flint must be informed of the current state of affairs and the action plans to resolve the crisis. We must develop a comprehensive communication plan to get needed information out to Flint’s residents, and it must be done now. Utilizing traditional and contemporary platforms like print, TV, Facebook, Twitter, and even Snapchat to message information to Flint residents are critical. However, if there is anything Flint has taught me, it is that the access to information is a privilege in our society. There is a large, underrepresented segment of Flint’s population and a widening communication gap. We must consider the many residents without access to traditional or contemporary media. Our approach should ensure we do not restrict our efforts and risk missing Flint’s residents with limited access to information because they may be disabled, non-English speakers or illiterate. An effective communication strategy for this crisis must break new ground in communications to be inclusive and reach 100% of these residents. As PR practitioners, it is our responsibility and challenge to do what has never been done before. We must make sure the information is not just available, but reaching, to all touched by this tragedy.
done.” In order for an agency to maintain relationships with their clients, honesty is critical.

The two guest speakers stressed the importance of students being actively involved with the PRSSA. Adkins and Lafnear both recommended holding a position on the E-Board, which will allow young professionals to expand their skillset; learn more about the industry, gain experience, and get a better understanding of where they best fit in. One of the numerous ways to get involved with the PRSSA is volunteering to write for Salute. This can help improve a student’s writing skills and give them a plethora of documents and articles with which to fill their portfolio. On top of writing for the PRSSA newsletter, it is also important to attend every mixer, social event, and agency tour possible to attain valuable relationships and connections with other students and professionals in the field.

Another useful tip shared with the class was to always have confidence, but at the same time remain coachable! In this career, one must be able to take constructive criticism well and use that criticism to further their skills as a writer and practitioner. As a young professional, it may seem overwhelming at first, so it is important to communicate with those you work with, and be sure to ask questions because giving feedback is just as important as receiving feedback.
The PRSSA Bateman competition is a national competition that challenges pre-professional public relations students to develop real-world experience and execute their own strategic public relations campaigns with an actual client. The competition is open to students from universities and PRSSA chapters from all across the country, and tests the critical thinking, resourcefulness and adaptability of each team. Each year, a new client is chosen at the competition level to be represented by the Bateman teams. The chosen 2016 Bateman competition client was the Student Veterans Association of America (SVAA), dedicated to providing resources, guidance and support to veterans transitioning back into a university or college setting from the military.

As a member of the WSU PRSSA Bateman team, many of my skills as a budding public relations practitioner were put to the test. Rather than simply theorizing what an actual campaign executed for our own Student Veterans Resource Center (SVRC) at WSU would entail, I had to be part of the effort to make it happen. Myself and a team of three other WSU public relations students: Katie Pusz, Stacey Kendall and Kyle Taylor, had to research, plan, implement and execute a campaign designed to fulfill specific objectives assigned to us through the SVAA headquarters. These objectives including raising awareness of the resources available to student veterans on our campus, shifting the narrative of the “broken veteran” among key stakeholders and publicizing the role and importance of organizations like the SVAA and the SVRC in our campus community.

The campaign that we chose to strategize and implement as a team was composed of several separate programs to accomplish our campaign objectives and goals. We distributed an online survey, hosted focus groups and spent many hours combing through program ideas that would be the most impactful toward raising positive awareness among our key publics about the wonderful work that the SVRC does for the success of student veterans. One of the highlights of our campaign was a testimonial video that we put together featuring success stories from our very own student veterans at WSU. The video highlighted the many ways that student veterans have found academic and personal success at our university, and helped to showcase their dedication to, and enthusiasm for the student organization itself.

A second program that we put together was the “Chalk About It” event - an event that encouraged student veterans and our general student body to come together to talk about their strengths. The diverse, non-traditional population of students at WSU was something we aimed to highlight with this program, in which passing students in our student center building could write their strengths on a chalkboard for all to see. We utilized the hashtags #VeteranWarriors and #WarriorStrong on multiple social media platforms to further emphasize the pride and strength of our student veterans while conducting the event.

Throughout the #WarriorStrong campaign, many real-world aspects of public relations became clear to me. I was forced to think on my feet, be creative under tight deadlines and communicate openly and consistently with our client to reach the campaign goals. When our Bateman competition submission was finally complete, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride for the work we had accomplished in the last several months. We were able to tell our student population about the hardworking, diligent and incredibly strong student veterans we have on our campus, as well as highlighting the importance of organizations like the SVRC in helping WSU students to achieve their academic goals. Said Dennis Landskroener, senior student veteran and management major at WSU, “We vets are all about service, so we were happy to help with the campaign. There was also the mutually beneficial exposure that both groups obtained by working together. The final project looked to us to be very positive and representative of what we both are about.”
College is all about picking the right classes, getting good grades, getting involved and making lifelong friends. But what happens after college? What happens when your professors turn into your boss and your work is for real clients and not for a grade?

Exactly one year ago, I was in my last semester at Wayne State. I had a full load of classes and two jobs. One was my day job, and the other was called “co-planning the student and alumni luncheon.” Little did I know that the luncheon would be a turning point that would lead me down the path to where I am today, simply by sitting myself at a table of professionals, who would later become my co-workers at Weber Shandwick.

After the luncheon, I followed up with my contacts from Weber Shandwick to thank them for coming and sponsoring me. One conversation led to another and I landed a phone interview. A successful phone interview led to an in-person interview, writing test and finally landing the internship.

To say I was ecstatic is an understatement. Weber Shandwick is a global public relations firm that prides itself in engaging clients with passion, intelligence and commitment for client success. I knew it was going to give me a unique and diverse experience working with various clients from automotive, technology, travel and government practices. As soon as I walked into the Detroit office (based in Birmingham), I knew this was going to be a great place for me to start my career. I was an intern for four months before being offered a full-time position as an associate account executive.

In that time, I took a few tips to heart from my colleagues that I believe were instrumental for me getting hired from my internship.

1. Never stop learning. Even when not at work, I was devouring the news or reading up on public relations or industry trends. Knowledge of the industry and what is going on in the world will be beneficial for you as a practitioner and for your client work.

2. Quality work is better than quick work. Meet your deadlines, but take time to read and reread all your emails, releases, documents, etc. Every time I work on a project I think to myself, “Is this ready for the client to see?”

3. Hustle. Work hard, ask detailed questions, come in early, leave late, and help wherever needed. Above all, do so with a positive attitude while being a sponge and taking in all the knowledge for those who have been in the business much longer than you. Working with people from different backgrounds in journalism, digital marketing, business and advertising has helped me grow in my career by learning from their knowledge and expertise.

Here I am a year later. Instead of planning the luncheon, I’m sponsoring a student and Salute as a professional. I continue to be an advocate for the school and for the public relations program, encouraging opportunities between Weber Shandwick and Wayne State. After graduation, I’m still a Warrior, aiming higher.
We would to thank everyone who helped to publish Salute. Thank you to all of the writers for your articles, you really helped to bring this issue to life! We also would like to extend our congratulations to the 2016 PRSSA graduates and the incoming executive board members, we wish you all the best on your journeys that lie ahead. Finally, we would like to thank to our faculty advisor, Dr. Shelly Najor for going above and beyond for our Chapter. We couldn’t ask for a better role model, who inspires us to be the best students and professionals that we can possibly be.

Sincerely,

Randy Kester and Kyle Taylor
Congratulations
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