

**PRSA/PRSSA
Relationship Manual
2011-2012**

PRSSA Public Relations
Student Society
of America



August 2011

Dear PRSSA Member:

The student Society was created by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) to cultivate a favorable and mutually advantageous relationship between students and professional public relations practitioners. More than 40 years later, PRSSA maintains that relationship with PRSA.

Each PRSSA Chapter has a PRSA sponsor Chapter. This handbook serves as a guide to furthering your personal and Chapter relationship with PRSA. The PRSA relationship is unique in that it not only provides current career development opportunities but opportunities beyond graduation.

Grow or initiate your PRSA relationship by being an active participant during PRSA/PRSSA Relationship Month this October. PRSSA recognizes the importance of developing a strong relationship with your sponsor Chapter and offers the Dr. F. H. Teahan award for PRSA/PRSSA relationship recognition.

If your Chapter would like additional copies of this manual, you may download them at www.prssa.org. If you prefer to have copies mailed to you, contact Vice President of Education Jeneen Garcia at PRSSA Headquarters at (212) 460-1474 or jeneen.garcia@prsa.org. To identify your sponsoring PRSA Chapter, visit www.prssa.org/chapters/prsa.

Special thanks to all PRSSA members who contributed ideas for this manual.

Beyond the manual, my role as Vice President of Professional Development is to assist you in developing a relationship with not only your sponsor Chapter but on a national level of PRSSA in any capacity, including planning events and establishing an initial connection. I am available to discuss any struggles or best practice techniques. I look forward to working with you to develop personal and Chapter relationships.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Noonan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Noonan
PRSSA 2011-2012 Vice President of Professional Development

Table of Contents
2011-2012 PRSA/PRSSA Relationship Manual

PRSSA and PRSA Relationship	1
Initial Creation	1
PRSSA Benefits From PRSA	1
PRSA Benefits From PRSSA	2
Connect With Your Sponsor Chapter	2
Interaction Ideas	3
Speakers.....	3
Media Tours.....	3
Agency Tours	3
Corporate Tours	4
Mentoring Program	4
Mentoring Fair	5
Intern Opportunities.....	5
PRSA Monthly Meetings	5
Best Practice Example	6
PRSA/PRSSA Relationships Beyond the Chapter Level	7
October Relationship Month	7
Dr. F. H. Teahan Awards	7

PRSSA and PRSA Relationship

Initial Creation

PRSSA owes its existence to the influence of three exceptional advocates – Chris Teahan, Jon Riffel, APR and J. Carroll Bateman, APR – who rallied and advocated with educators, students and practitioners to form a student Society. They reached their triumph in November 1967 at the PRSA Assembly in Philadelphia, where delegates voted unanimously to establish PRSSA.

Today the two Societies are still deeply intertwined as PRSSA has progressed through the support of PRSA leaders like the PRSA Foundation and Betsy Plank, APR, Fellow PRSA. Organized into more than 100 Chapters, PRSA offers professional development, networking, recognition and leadership opportunities for professionals in regions across the United States. Chapters provide PRSA members the resources to be visibly engaged in their respective public relations communities.

It is important that your PRSSA Chapter works to develop and maintain a strong, mutually beneficial relationship with your sponsor Chapter. These professionals can offer you networking opportunities, career mentoring, speakers for Chapter meetings and countless other opportunities. In return you can offer them reverse mentoring, volunteers and assistance with social media or other activities.

PRSSA Benefits From PRSA

Developing a relationship with PRSA members can be an intricate part in developing your career in the public relations industry. Build those relationships by taking advantage of the PRSA benefits. PRSSA members have access to many PRSA benefits, including:

- *PRSA Member Directory.* If you are looking for a mentor, want to set up informational interviews or wish to arrange a speaker for your Chapter, log in to MyPRSA to search the directory of PRSA's 21,000 public relations professionals in every field.
- *MyPRSA.* By setting up a MyPRSA account, you gain access to a variety of benefits, including free articles and case studies, networking tools and the PRSA Member Directory.
- *PRSA Associate Membership.* As a PRSSA member, you may join PRSA National for just \$60 a year as an Associate Member – a nearly \$200 discount.
- *PR Case Studies.* As winners of Silver and Bronze Anvil awards, these public relations case studies detail the best work in the public relations field today. Use them to help learn about the industry, prepare for a case study competition or simply enhance your education.
- *Webinars.* Get discounted access to PRSA webinars, which offer numerous public relations and communications training courses and can be a great source of programming for your Chapter meetings.
- *News and Intelligence.* Access PRSA's database of articles and case studies, *Public Relations Tactics* and the *Public Relations Strategist*, PRSA blogs and podcasts.
- *PRSA Sponsor Chapters.* Every PRSSA Chapter is partnered with a PRSA sponsor Chapter. The professionals at these Chapter(s) can be your mentors, speakers and advisers.

PRSA Benefits From PRSSA

PRSA members can benefit from a successful PRSSA relationship as well. By getting to know valuable PRSSA members they can gain insight on the latest trends and coming trends and recruit valuable interns. Some Chapters have created further benefits for PRSA by offering helpful events and volunteers.

Connect with your Sponsor Chapter

Every PRSSA Chapter has a PRSA sponsor Chapter. While you may reach out to any PRSA Chapter, your first and closest contact should be with your PRSA sponsor Chapter. You can browse a full list of Chapters on the PRSA website.

Utilize your Professional Adviser to begin building that relationship with the Chapter. Once you are comfortable with your sponsor Chapter, hold regular events that integrate PRSA members while attending the events they host.

If you are not located geographically near your sponsor Chapter, try the following tips to build a relationship:

- *Webinars*: come up with a discussion topic and reach out to your sponsor Chapter to see if they can provide any insights. Book a room (in a library or academic building) where you can project the individuals on a screen and get your Chapter involved with the discussion.
- *Twitter chats or Skype*: use social media to your advantage and connect with your PRSA sponsor Chapter.
- *Facebook*: if your sponsor Chapter has a Facebook page, ask if you can join and get involved in discussions or start some.
- *Meet halfway*: when making arrangements with your sponsoring PRSA Chapter, suggest that you find a town or city that's of equal distance for both Chapters in order for both groups to meet and collaborate.
- *Plan an annual trip*: while they may be far away, there is still an opportunity to connect in person. Plan ahead and try carpooling to their location for a luncheon.

Many professionals are more than willing to assist students, but remember that help is not given without asking for it. Be proactive and reach out to your sponsor Chapter.

Faculty and Professional Advisers

Every year, PRSSA Chapters elect one Faculty Adviser and one or two Professional Advisers to serve as the connection to the sponsoring PRSA Chapter. These Advisers are among the most visible role models of the public relations profession and they can help your Chapter access the talent and valuable resources of PRSA.

Chapter Liaison

Your Chapter should consider electing a liaison to attend local PRSA meetings. The liaison will open the lines of communication between your members and the professionals. The liaison can also help solicit financial support, speakers, volunteer opportunities and job leads from PRSA and the professional community.

Interaction Ideas

Chapters should inform members about the networking opportunities available within the professional community. To further build your relationship, try inviting PRSA members to some of your Chapter's events.

Consider some of the following options for your Chapter:

- Offer professional ethics training
- Facilitate public relations tours of media and communications facilities, agencies and corporations
- Develop and maintain mentoring programs
- Research and promote internship programs
- Conduct joint PRSSA/PRSA public service campaigns
- Provide workshops on résumé writing, portfolio critiques and interviewing skills
- Provide career guidance through campus counseling centers and advisers
- Assist in job searches for entry level professionals

Speakers

Develop a speaker calendar by determining a fixed schedule for PRSSA meetings and identifying the topics and professional speakers that you would like to participate. Ask your list of PRSA contacts at the beginning of the semester if they are available to speak on any of these topics or can refer someone who can. If you do not have a list, connect with your Professional Adviser or the Chapter President of your sponsoring PRSA Chapter to help create one. This list can become a regional directory that can be helpful to both students and professionals.

Provide the calendar to school publications, local newspapers and the PRSA Chapter to promote during their meetings. In addition, assign a Chapter officer (such as a liaison) to follow up with confirmations, meeting logistics, and thank-you letters after the speaking engagements.

Media Tours

Many students will be responsible for media relations during internships and class projects, but they have little or no knowledge of how media relations really work. Schedule media tours with local print and electronic media to explain the process and get firsthand input from journalists on how they select stories, pitch story ideas, what information is important from public relations professionals, and the do's and don'ts of media relations.

If you are unable to schedule a media tour, consider scheduling a panel and invite PRSA professionals to attend and give their perspective on how to pitch to the media.

Agency Tours

Understanding how an agency works — from pitching to budgets to billing clients — often provides great insight into career decisions for public relations students. The opportunity to work on a variety of projects within multiple teams is attractive to many. Agency tours give valuable insight into an important part of the profession.

Contact your PRSA Chapter to reach local professionals and ask for their assistance in planning these events. Pair one or two students with a professional to help with the logistics and interactions between the students and the agency representative(s).

Corporate Tours

Corporate public relations, to some, is a completely different world from agency life. Reach out to your local PRSA Chapter to see who works on the corporate side to provide a briefing or overview of their PR functions and the way in which they interface with the company, its employees and its stockholders.

Having both corporate and agency tours makes an invaluable comparison for members.

Mentoring Program

Many Chapters have found a mentoring program to be a priceless experience for both professionals and students. Use these steps to build or grow a mentoring program within your Chapter:

- Identify the students who are interested in a mentoring program and categorize them by experience, year in school and objectives. This will help you match them with a professional who best meets his/her needs. Work closely with your Professional Adviser and local PRSA Chapter to identify professionals interested in mentoring. It is often more effective if the professionals ask fellow practitioners to participate in a mentoring program.
- Clearly outline the requirements of the program for the student and the professional prior to their beginning the program. This will allow him/her to understand and agree to the commitment, avoiding any misconceptions of what the program will offer.
- The responsibility for making initial contact and defining the mentoring objectives should reside with the student. By doing this, the student learns how to effectively make professional contacts, improve his/her networking skills, and partake in an activity that will become a skill necessary for their success in public relations. It will also preclude a professional from spending a great deal of time tracking down a student who is too busy or not interested in participating in the program.
- A kick-off reception or meeting for the students and professionals has proven to be successful in helping both parties become more comfortable with the mentoring program. It may also establish the relationship earlier and easier than phone calls or emails between the individuals. You might include it as part of an initial meeting of the PRSSA Chapter in the fall or as a part of a local professional meeting in order to reduce the number of meetings and improve attendance.
- Like any public relations campaign, an evaluation of the progress is also recommended to determine whether all the students and professionals have had a good experience, or if there is damage control to do on behalf of either party. This will eliminate bad feelings and talk among either group that would diminish the program's overall success.

Mentoring Fair

Many PRSA Chapters hold “mentoring” fairs (similar to a job fair) for students. Employers set up tables and talk to students about internship opportunities at their firms. The event enables students to enhance their interviewing skills and allows professionals to recruit talent.

Intern Opportunities

Work with your career services department at school to identify new internships and companies in the community that would interest the students. Use connections with PRSA Chapter members to investigate the public relations function at these companies and determine if they might be interested in creating an intern position. Often, companies do not offer internships solely because they haven’t been asked.

The professional community often has the network and contacts to shortcut this process and find out if opportunities are available. In addition, many times a company that has sponsored an internship will be more willing to participate if a fellow professional is there to guide them through the process.

If no one in your Chapter is able to or does not wish to take on an internship opportunity available, encourage the company to post the information in the PRSSA Internship Center. Contact Joe Clarkson, national vice president of internships/job services, for more information.

Public Service Projects

Identify public service projects that the PRSA Chapter and the PRSSA Chapter can work on jointly. The interaction will build relationships and create an ideal way for students to get on the-job training along side professionals. From the planning to the execution and evaluation, students will be a part of the team, absorbing the information and watching the implementation. There’s no better way to build a strong relationship than to work along side someone helping the community.

PRSA Monthly Meetings

Encourage your Chapter members – especially seniors beginning their transition to PRSA – to attend local PRSA Chapter monthly meetings before they begin to search for jobs. Establishing relationships before asking for assistance works not only in all areas of public relations (media relations, community relations, etc.), but also for job searches.

Beyond monthly meetings, look into what events your PRSA Chapter holds that PRSSA members can attend, such as happy hours or professional development sessions. If members cannot attend a full event, volunteer to do check-in for the events – it is a great way to connect names with faces.

Best Practice Example

Communications Connection – Kent State University Chapter of PRSSA

PRSSA Kent wanted to create an event that would connect public relations, advertising, marketing and communications students with northeast Ohio professionals in order to gain networking experience and receive internship and job opportunities.

In order for this event to occur, PRSSA Kent partnered with Kent State's American Advertising Federation (AAF) to begin planning. Both student organizations collaborated to create a Communications Connection event that met the needs of students majoring in advertising, marketing, public relations and communications.

Members from both organizations established a committee to facilitate the planning and execution of the event. In particular, members of PRSSA Kent were instrumental in planning the specifics of the event and members of AAF Kent created the logos used on the invitations sent to area professionals. The groups also jointly request funds from Kent State Allocation Committee and AAF raises funds from other initiatives.

The Communications Connection has become a recurring event and is very successful in providing students the opportunity to meet with area professionals face-to-face, while learning valuable information to help students begin a career in the communication field.

At the 2011 Communications Connection, 40 students met with 14 communication professionals to discuss career preparations topics and seek advice about their resumes. Several students obtained internship and job opportunities through the networking done at this event.

PRSA/PRSSA Relationships Beyond the Chapter Level

PRSA/PRSSA Relationship Month – October

Every October, PRSSA and PRSA Chapters are encouraged to plan a joint meeting or social so that all students and professionals can have the opportunity to develop a professional relationship, discuss various issues within their Chapters and receive advice from each other. These events are designed to foster a healthy relationship with local PRSA Chapters and will develop into a more consistent gathering between both Chapters.

Initial Steps to Take:

- Discuss this initiative with Chapter members and encourage their participation.
- Find available dates in October that will work best for Chapter members.
- If your Chapter doesn't already know, find out who the sponsoring PRSA Chapter is (via the PRSSA website) and make contact via phone or email.
- Make initial contact with your PRSSA Professional Adviser. If that fails, contact the PRSA Chapter President and introduce yourself and your Chapter. Ask if they would like to participate in a social and/or meeting to take place during October's PRSSA/PRSA Relationship Month.
- Offer available dates given by Chapter members to host an event or ask to join a current meeting or social the PRSA Chapter has already planned during this time.

Furthermore, interact with PRSA members at the 2011 National Conference in Orlando to celebrate relationship month. Suggest a meet up with the attendees from your sponsor Chapter.

Dr. F. H. Teahan Award for Outstanding PRSA/PRSSA Relationship

Does your Chapter have a strong relationship with your PRSA sponsor Chapter? If so, submit your Chapter for the Outstanding PRSA/PRSSA Relationship Teahan Award for the chance to win \$300 and a plaque for your PRSSA Chapter and a trophy for your PRSA Chapter (more information available at

http://www.prssa.org/scholarships_competitions/chapter/teahans/prsa_relationship/).

This award category recognizes the strong relationship between a PRSSA Chapter and its PRSA sponsor Chapter. Criteria include (but are not limited to): programs that encourage interaction (speeches, meetings) between members of the Chapters; attendance and assistance by PRSSA members at PRSA Chapter events; special support of the PRSSA Chapter and its members by the PRSA Chapter; such as internships; professional advisory councils and committees; joint seminars; sharing of PRSSA Chapter newsletter and other information with PRSA Chapter members; awards and recognition given by the PRSA Chapter and members or the PRSSA Chapter and members to one another for outstanding performance.

Applications for this and all other Teahan Awards are due in early June. Check the PRSSA website for the exact deadline and application materials.



ADVANCING THE PROFESSION AND THE FUTURE PROFESSIONAL.