

**PRSSA/PRSA
Relationship Manual
2016-2017**

PRSSA Public Relations
Student Society
of America



July 2016

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. The relationships you form as a Chapter but also the ones that you form individually with PRSA members will be vital to your professional development. Creating a professional, mentoring relationship between yourself and a PRSA member is one of the best ways you can utilize the connection between PRSSA and PRSA. Even beyond PRSSA, mentorship is an invaluable tool to expand your network, continue learning and maintain accountability and credibility as a professional.

This handbook is to serve as a guide to furthering your individual and Chapter relationship with PRSA and to help you achieve your short and long-term goals. Also, it features helpful information about how to participate actively in PRSSA/PRSA Relationship Month this October and how to start and maintain a mentorship program with your PRSA sponsor Chapter. You will find information needed to apply for the PRSSA Dr. F. H. Teahan award for PRSSA/PRSA relationship recognition that you will be eligible to apply for after establishing mutually beneficial relationships with PRSA.

If your Chapter would like additional copies of this manual, you may download them at www.prssa.prsa.org. If you prefer to have copies mailed to you, contact Executive Director of PRSSA Jeneen Garcia at PRSSA Headquarters at (212) 460-1466 or jeneen.garcia@prsa.org. If you haven't identified your sponsoring PRSA Chapter or are looking for contact details, visit www.prssa.prsa.org/chapters/prsa.

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

All my best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Skeele".

Liz Skeele
PRSSA 2016–2017 Vice President of Professional Development

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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 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 utilizing your MyPRSA account, you gain access to a variety of benefits, including complimentary webinars and case studies, networking tools and the PRSA Member Directory.
- *PRSA Associate Membership.* As a PRSSA member within five months of or up to two years after graduation, 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 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 access to PRSA webinars, which offer numerous training courses and can be a great source of programming for your Chapter meetings. In addition to paid webinars, PRSA regularly offers complimentary webinars to PRSSA members.
- *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 Chapters can be your mentors, speakers and advisers.

For more details on each of these benefits, visit www.prssa.org/about/PRSA.

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 are able to 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 will likely be with your PRSA sponsor Chapter. You can browse the list of Chapters on the PRSA website (www.prsa.org/Network/Chapters/).

Utilize your Professional Adviser to begin building that relationship with the Chapter. Once you and your Chapter 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 sponsor PRSA Chapter, suggest that you find a meeting location that's of equal distance for both Chapters in order for both groups to meet and collaborate.
- *Plan an annual trip:* While your sponsor PRSA Chapter 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 their connections 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
- Offer assistance to you PRSA sponsor Chapter with events and/or campaigns

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 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 public relations functions and the way in which they interface with the company, its employees and its stockholders.

Mentoring Program

Many Chapters have found a mentoring program to be a priceless experience for both professionals and students. Use these steps to build a mentoring program within your Chapter, or connect with a Chapter that already has a solid system in place to gain insight:

- 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 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. To keep the relationship going, mix individual meetings with group events. PRSSA/PRSA Relationship Month in October is a great reason to host a get-together for all mentors and mentees.
- 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 the national vice president of career 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 alongside 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 alongside someone helping the community. Utilizing your Chapter’s student-run firm, if you have one, to help with pro-bono initiatives is a great way to align all professional development efforts and engage both PRSSA and PRSA members in meaningful work.

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 Examples

ADPR Connection – University of Georgia

In 2009, the members of the PRSSA John E. Drewry Chapter wanted to create an event to connect public relations, communications and advertising students with PRSA professionals in Atlanta and throughout the state of Georgia. The goal was to help students develop valuable professional contacts and be better prepared for a career in the communications field.

ADPR Connection was created, which is a student-run networking event that is jointly hosted by UGA PRSSA and AdClub, an organization similar to PRSSA but within the advertising major. This event includes a luncheon, professional workshops, a networking mixer and career fair. In past years, the event has brought more than 100 professionals from over 50 companies to interact with 600 students. Through generous corporate sponsors, this event is free for both students and professionals.

Benefits of ADPR Connection include a professional headshot booth during the career fair and a blog that prepares students for the event. The blog features tips on professional attire, interviews with past attendees and spotlights on companies that will be in attendance. Additionally, a “Land The Job” boot camp is held prior to the event to help attendees enhance their résumés, interview and interpersonal skills.

UGA PRSSA will host its sixth ADPR Connection in 2015. This event has been invaluable in providing students the opportunity to meet with PRSA area professionals face-to-face and a large number of PRSSA students have secured prestigious internships and job offers through ADPR Connection.

Monthly Luncheons – University of Florida

Every month, North Florida PRSA hosts membership luncheons where members can enjoy a community lunch and listen to a speaker from the communications industry. Because the University of Florida is almost an hour and a half away from Jacksonville, UF PRSSA encourages its members to spend the day with the Chapter in the city for these luncheons.

The luncheons serve multiple purposes for the Chapter. The first is to allow PRSSA members the opportunity to network with local professionals in a casual atmosphere, which leads to mentorship, internship and job opportunities for members. The second is to allow for professional development from the speaker's presentation.

After the luncheon ends, it's not uncommon for members of UF PRSSA to stay and speak with different professionals, exchanging business cards before the professionals leave to head back to work. The Chapter's professional adviser also stays to answer questions for members. The day-long commitment also allows for peer-to-peer bonding. Oftentimes, the Chapter will stick around Jacksonville to do group activities like shopping, getting coffee and more. Fostering a close relationship like this with UF's parent PRSA Chapter has led to job, internship and mentorship opportunities for UF PRSSA members.

Agency Tours – University of Florida

Each spring, UF PRSSA partners with North Florida PRSA to attend agency tours in the Jacksonville area. The tours are a new, recurring favorite of PRSSA members.

In March 2015, members attended a panel discussion and participated in résumé/portfolio workshops prior to visiting three Jacksonville agencies. The panel-style discussion on different approaches to the public relations industry included representatives from corporate, nonprofit, agency and private practice public relations.

Not only were members able to experience agency life on a local scale, but they were also afforded the opportunity to network with PRSA professionals during and after the résumé/portfolio workshops and public relations panel. Countless connections were made between professionals and PRSSA members in this casual and welcoming environment.

Mentorship – Ohio University Scripps

In 2015, Scripps PRSSA started a professional mentor/mentee program. They asked any interested Chapter members to fill out a short survey asking about their career aspirations and interests, then asked all professional advisers and PRSA members in the area if they would be interested in serving as a mentor. Scripps PRSSA's vice president of external relations matched each professional with two to four students according to similarities, and they then began talking on the phone about once a month. The mentorship program has been extremely helpful for Chapter members, because they now have a PRSA professional to turn to for everything from a recommendation to a résumé critique to career advice.

PRSSA/PRSA Relationships Beyond the Chapter Level

PRSSA/PRSA 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.

Other Tips for Relationship Month:

- Set Chapter goals for Relationship Month early in the semester so you have ample planning time. For example, the Chapter could strive to successfully plan at least one event with its local PRSA Chapter in October.
- If your Chapter has a mentorship program with PRSA (see Mentoring Program, p. 7), use Relationship Month as a time to plan mentorship meet-ups, gain feedback and deepen relationships between mentors and mentees. If your Chapter does not yet have a mentorship program, use the time to initiate one with your PRSA sponsor Chapter.
- Interact with PRSA members at the National Conference to celebrate Relationship Month. Suggest a meet-up with attendees from your sponsor Chapter, and make sure to engage PRSA members on Twitter and other social media during the Conference.

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

Does your Chapter have a strong relationship with your PRSA sponsor Chapter? If so, submit your Chapter for the Outstanding PRSSA/PRSA 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

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.

Connecting with New Professionals

The New Professionals section of PRSA is another valuable relationship for PRSSA members to cultivate, either through the Chapter or individually. New Professionals are PRSA members who are new to the profession. Since most are recent college graduates and were formerly members of PRSSA, they are highly relatable to current PRSSA members and experience many of the challenges you will face in the upcoming years. Forming mentorship relationships with New Professionals has numerous benefits, including access to a large network of public relations practitioners in which you will soon be included.

To begin mentorship with New Professionals, you and your Chapter members can take the following steps:

- Reach out to former members of your local PRSSA Chapter who have graduated in the last one to two years and joined the PRSA New Professionals Section. Ask if they know of any contacts who would be interested in being mentors. You can also ask them to come and speak at a Chapter meeting about their experience with New Professionals.
- Ask your local PRSA sponsor Chapter for a list of New Professionals in the Chapter, and target these members when creating a mentorship program.
- Network with New Professionals via social media by following the hashtag #npprsa.
- Ask your Professional Adviser to help you locate New Professionals in your area who would like to be involved in mentorship. Attending local PRSA Chapter events is also a great way to network with these members.
- Visit the New Professionals section on www.prsa.org for additional information, section leader contacts, free webinars and podcasts and more.



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