

# Proposed Assessment Plan

## B.A., B.S. in Public Relations

The 2008 program review of the Public Relations Program identified a need for an assessment plan for the Public Relations Program. This proposed assessment plan will allow us to measure if the goals and objectives for the public relations students and the public relations major program are successfully met.

This plan contains the following points of analysis:

- Goals and objectives for the public relations program
- Assessing student learning
- Assessing program goals and objectives

### I. Goals and objectives for the public relations program

The curriculum for the public relations program reflects what educators and public relations professionals see as the best in public relations education. Following are the goals and the objectives for the undergraduate public relations program.

Global goals in knowledge and behaviors for the public relations program are:

That the undergraduate public relations major is a broad, liberal arts program

That the undergraduate public relations major has *both* knowledge/theory *and* skills in the study of public relations

That the public relations major is grounded in management theory, strategy, research, writing, business/economics, internships/professional experience, and ethics

Objectives—specified content areas in knowledge and behaviors—for the public relations program which satisfy and support the program goals stated above are:

***Knowledge/theories of:*** communication  
Public relations communication/image management and crisis management  
Public relations strategic communication  
Role of public relations communication in society  
Ethical issues  
Research theory

Management theories  
Relationship building with relevant audiences  
Public relations history  
Multi-cultural communication in public relations  
Campaign message design  
Economic and business principles

***Skills in:*** written and oral communication  
Conducting research and analysis  
Strategic planning of corporate relations/ assisting the organization's mission  
Strategic planning of public campaigns  
Audience segmentation  
Practicing various kinds of public relations  
Practicing various kinds of campaigns  
Ethical decision-making in all kinds of strategic communication  
Message production  
Cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity

In order to begin to assess both **student learning** and **program goals and learning**,

- (1) the goals and objectives listed here above must be identified in the required and elective courses that students take for the major in public relations.
- (2) Further, data collected on student learning and on the program as a whole initiate the evaluation and assessment process.
- (3) And finally, these data and findings gathered from the students and on the program as a whole assess the success of the public relations major and program to deliver the goals and objectives acknowledged above.

## II. Assessing student learning

(1) All three of the global goals listed are satisfied through the public relations curriculum. Required courses in economics (Eco 103) and in communication (Com 111, Com 161, Com 165, Com 178, Com 268, Com 297, Com 377, Com 378) and several elective courses embody the goals of a liberal arts education, knowledge and skills in public relations, and specified experience in theory, strategic communication, excellent oral and written communication skills, ethics, business/economics, and professional experience.

All of the objectives listed also are covered in the assemblage of required and elective courses.

(2) Data will be collected from students which initiates the assessment process by identifying if the goals and objectives present in the coursework have been learned by the students:

**pre-test** given in Com 178 Introduction to Public Relations measures the knowledge and skills of the entry-level student in public relations.

**post-test** given in Com 378 Public Relations Management: Corporate Relations measures the knowledge and skills of the graduating student in public relations.

The pre-test and post-test contain 2 or 3 multiple choice questions taken from each required course. In addition, questions patterned after a writing test that agencies use for persons applying for a job (for example, the Ketcham Public Relations Agency) assess punctuation skills, spelling skills, and editing skills. Finally, the tests end with an open-ended question that asks the student to comment on a current event in a short paragraph. Both the pre-test and the post-test given in the same school year will contain the same questions for comparison purposes, but every year a third of the questions will be changed in order to discourage knowledge of the content from year to year.

**informal interviews and discussion groups** with graduating students provide qualitative data on the students' experiences on the public relations major

**student portfolio** prepared by every public relations major contains assignments from most courses taken for the major which indicate theoretical/strategic knowledge and technical skills

- Eco 103: paper/economic analysis and review of business news article
- Com 161: two press releases  
feature news story  
radio script  
television news story  
television announcement
- Com 165: two press releases  
three news stories  
feature news story
- Com 178: paper: "Get Involved" organization report
- Com 268: press kit: two news releases, television script, radio script, newsletter, feature story
- Com 297: research report: communication experiment, SPSS data entry and data analysis exercise
- Com 377: public relations campaign proposal document: propose, research and execute campaign from start to finish
- Com 378: public relations management paper: detailing corporate relations for an organization
- Com 398: report on internship experience

Other assignments selected by the student from elective courses in the major and other courses, for example, photography, graphic

design, web design, business courses

personal resume prepared by the student

**reports from internship supervisors** which report on public relations students' knowledge and skills

**alumni data** collected by the School of Communication and by the Development Office which provide reflection on the public relations major

**public relations faculty** will meet and discuss the successes and deficiencies in student experiences in public relations major

(3) Data and findings gathered from the students, from faculty, and from professional internship supervisors will be compared to the goals and objectives identified for the student learning experience.

**Data from the pre-tests and post-tests will compare and measure student achievement throughout the four-year time frame of the major. 80% correct answers on the post-test will indicate mastery of the goals and objectives in the curriculum.**

Comments by the graduating students will connect their experiences to the learning goals and objectives.

**Student portfolios will be read and studied by faculty and by public relations professionals in order to measure student achievement of goals and objectives throughout the major. Writing samples in the portfolio will be assessed according to correct writing format for each kind of writing and for correct English mechanics of punctuation, grammar, and language.**

Alumni data will provide long-term findings on the preparation of the public relations major for work in the field of public relations, for graduate school, and for other, related careers. Comments by alumni will assess individual student learning as well as assess program goals.

**All public relations students must receive at least a “C” in each required course in the major.**

While all public relations majors are strongly encouraged to take at least one internship and most likely two internships, based on the advice of the internship advisor, those students who do not demonstrate a proficiency in public relations communication will not be allowed to do an internship; students who do not reflect the excellence of the public relations major will not be allowed to represent the ISU major in public relations. The public relations faculty anticipate this situation to be a rare occurrence.

And finally, as detailed in the public relations program review document, these student learning data will be matched to the four Shared Learning Outcomes: critical inquiry and problem solving, public opportunity, diverse and global perspectives, and life-long learning. Assessment of student data to the shared learning outcomes are qualitative insights into degree of achieving these student learning goals.

### III. Assessing program goals and learning

(1) All three of the global goals are satisfied through the public relations program. Required courses in economics (Eco 103) and in communication (Com 111, Com 161, Com 165, Com 178, Com 268, Com 297, Com 377, Com 378) and several elective courses embody the goals of a liberal arts education, knowledge and skills in public relations, and specified experience in theory, strategic communication, excellent oral and written communication skills, ethics, business/economics, and professional experience.

As with the assessment of student learning, all of the objectives are also fulfilled in the assemblage of required and elective courses in the public relations program.

(2) Data collected from educational and professional agencies in public relations provide the ideal coursework requirements for any public relations program. The Commission on Public Relations, the educational division of the National Communication Association, identifies those courses that every undergraduate major program in public relations should have. In addition, certification through the Public Relations Society of America—CEPR, or the Certification in Education for Public Relations—sets the certification standards for the ideal and complete program in public relations. And finally, awards achieved by the student organization in public relations—PRSSA, or the Public Relations Student Society of America—demonstrate excellence in a public relations program.

**The ISU public relations program follows *every* recommendation of the Commission on Public Relations, of the National Communication Association, for the ideal undergraduate major in public relations with required courses in:**

Introduction to Public Relations	(ISU Com 178)
Case Studies in Public Relations	(ISU Com 275, 321, 377, 378)
Public Relations Writing and Production	(ISU Com 161, 165, 268)
Public Relations Campaigns	(ISU Com 321, 377, 378)
Public Relations Planning and Management	(ISU Com 377, 378)
Supervised Work Experience in Public Relations/Internship	(ISU Com 398)
Public Relations Research, Measurement, and Evaluation	(ISU Com 297, 377, 378)
Directed electives	(6 courses as electives)

**As detailed in the program review of public relations document, Standards for Certification in Education for Public Relations demonstrate that every recommendation for required courses and additional experiences in the ideal public relations program are satisfied by the ISU program in public relations.**

ISU public relations program has a PRSSA charter and public relations faculty who belong to the professional agency, the Public Relations Society of America. The public relations faculty are established scholars and educators in the field. The Port of Entry published by the Commission on Public Relations education recommends that the curriculum/program is grounded in liberal arts, communication, and business disciplines and prepares students for career growth in the field and related fields. The resources, equipment, and resources support the public relations program.

**National awards and recognition of the ISU chapter of PRSSA demonstrates the superior achievements of the public relations majors in the public relations program.**

As detailed in the program review document, several awards in ethics and consistent national placement of the Bateman Team competition among PRSSA chapters nationwide support the excellence of the public relations program. Additionally, the ISU PRSSA chapter has supported several public campaigns to support needs in the community: recycling, fundraising for charities. Every year, the ISU supports 25 to 30 students to visit the national convention of PRSSA and PRSA. And finally, the PRSSA chapter has a professional agency in public relations which does consulting work for public relations professionals in the community.

**Alumni data, internship supervisor data, and faculty input also assess the success of the public relations program.**

(3) Data and findings gathered from these educational and professional experts will be compared to the goals and objectives identified in the ideal public relations program.

Data from a textual analysis of the proposed courses by the NCA Commission on Public Relations will assess if the material in these ISU courses matches the goals and objectives of the excellent public relations program.

ISU should pursue the CEPR certification as administered by the PRSA. This elaborate and detailed review of the public relations program will confirm the superior aspects of the program and indicate places for improvement. Costs are \$300 to apply and about \$2500 to \$3000 to bring two experts—a nationally recognized educator and professional in public relations—to visit the ISU campus and students, faculty, and administration to assess the curriculum and extracurricular experiences of the ISU program in public relations. The Standards of Certification assessed are:

- Public relations curriculum
- Full-time and part-time faculty
- Resources, equipment and facilities and library resources

Public relations students  
Assessment  
Relationships with alumni and professionals  
Relationships with total unit and the university  
PRSSA chapter  
Diversity

Data and records of the PRSSA chapter's achievements and activities also should be recorded in detail. Alumni data, data from professionals who know the ISU program, and faculty data also support and assess how the program facilitates the goals and objectives of the program.

Prepared by

Mary Anne Moffitt  
Professor  
School of Communication  
[mamoffi@ilstu.edu](mailto:mamoffi@ilstu.edu)  
438-7746

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