

PRSSA



2024-2025

PRSSA/PRSA Relationship Manual

Dear PRSSA Member,

As Immediate Past President of PRSSA, I want to stress the importance of the relationship between PRSSA and PRSA. This connection is crucial for both students and professionals in the public relations industry.

PRSSA provides a platform for students to learn, grow, and network with peers who share their interests in public relations. As the largest organization of its kind, PRSSA connects students with resources and opportunities that can help them succeed in their future careers. PRSA, on the other hand, is the largest professional organization for public relations professionals, providing a wealth of knowledge, networking opportunities, and resources to help members stay on top of industry trends and best practices.

The relationship between PRSSA and PRSA is a symbiotic one, with benefits that flow both ways. PRSA members can help mentor and guide PRSSA students, while also learning from the fresh perspectives and new ideas that students bring to the table. PRSSA members, in turn, can benefit from the insights and experiences of PRSA professionals, who can provide guidance and advice as they navigate their way through the early stages of their careers.

Chapters can leverage this relationship to their advantage by partnering with their local PRSA Chapters to host joint events, such as panel discussions, networking opportunities, and workshops. These events can be great opportunities for students to connect with professionals in their area, learn more about the industry, and build their professional networks.

In addition, PRSA offers a wide range of resources that can be beneficial to PRSSA Chapters. For example, the PRSA Speakers Bureau can help Chapters find speakers for events, while the PRSA Job center can provide valuable job search resources for students.

This handbook will assist you in developing a fruitful relationship with your local PRSA Chapter. This guide should be used as a template on how to engage with your local PRSA Chapters in topics such as ethics or how to start and maintain a mentorship program with your PRSA sponsor Chapter. You will also find information needed to apply for the PRSSA Dr. F. H. Teahan award for PRSSA/PRSA Relationship Recognition.

As a former PRSSA member and a new PRSA member, I can attest to the many benefits that come from being a part of these organizations. I encourage all PRSSA Chapters to take advantage of the resources and opportunities available through PRSA, and to continue fostering a strong relationship between our two Chapters.

If your Chapter would like additional copies of this manual, you may download them at www.prssa.prssa.org. If you haven't identified your PRSA sponsor Chapter or are looking for contact details, visit prssa.prssa.org/chapters/prsa. If there are any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best Wishes,



Sankalp Sharma
Immediate Past President, PRSSA

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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 organizations like the PRSA Foundation and leaders such as 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, PRSA Strategies & Tactics, 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.

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, the PRSA Chapter that sponsored your charter application is your PRSA sponsor Chapter. You can browse the list of sponsor Chapters on the [PRSSA website](#).

Utilize your Professional Adviser and/or Faculty 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. Examples of events that integrate PRSA members are speed networking sessions with PRSA professionals, Q&A panels, and workshops. Many PRSA Chapters utilize students to write blogs or recaps on their events. Ask about opportunities to get involved at future events to engage directly with your local PRSA Chapter.

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.
- **Social Media:** Use social media or video platforms to connect and bring awareness to your sponsor Chapter. For example, highlight your local PRSA Chapter leaders on your PRSSA Chapter account so your members can familiarize themselves with mentors and resources available through PRSA.
- **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. District Conferences are a great way to connect with PRSA leaders from your sponsor Chapter. 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 your 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 your Chapter's social media coordinator 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 their 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 the student 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. Using the Internship Center is a great reference point that can be used to understand the types of companies and industries chapters can include when curating their own database for members. 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. This event has continued to be a much-awaited event for the past eight years.

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.

Annual Award Ceremony — Waynesburg University

Every year, PRSA Pittsburg hosts an awards ceremony where members can celebrate community achievements in the industry. This Chapter offers an award for its region’s PRSSA Chapters to apply for. PRSSA members are encouraged to apply and attend the ceremony to connect with local professionals. It is often a great opportunity for students to expand their networks, while challenging their Chapter to grow and launch new programming every year.

This Chapter also offers an award for PRSSA student scholars, allowing individuals to add this accolade to their resume and portfolio.

Fostering a close relationship like this with Waynesburg’s parent PRSA Chapter has led to job, internship and mentorship opportunities for Waynesburg PRSSA members. It also helps ease the transition from PRSSA to PRSA.

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 February 2019, 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.

Although this event was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the UF PRSSA chapter aimed to host a virtual agency tour in spring of 2021. All parties involved hope to be back in person this year.

PRSSA/PRSA Relationships Beyond the Chapter Level

PRSSA/PRSA Relationship Month

Each year, 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.

- 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 March.
- 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 [ICON](#) 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 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.

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 prsaoundation.org/scholarships-awards/champions-teahan-national-chapter-awards-competition.)

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 at the end of April. 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 the PRSA website for additional information, section leader contacts, free webinars and podcasts and more.

PRSSA

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