

Nine Years of Using Our Powers for Good:

**Service-Learning in the
Public Relations Campaign Course**

**Presented by
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Spring 2014**

What Is Service-Learning?

- “Academic Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. - *National Service-Learning Clearinghouse*
- Distinct from volunteering or interning
- Opportunities abound across all disciplines (e.g., history, biology, PT/OT, etc.)

Public Relations Has an Image Problem

- Despite a strong professional code of ethics, public relations is one of the least trusted professions.
 - *“Watching the public relations industry discuss ethics is a little like watching tourists from a foreign country attempting to speak a language they barely understand. They seem enthusiastic and sincere, and many of the right words come out of their mouths, but they just don't quite manage to make sense.”*
(Center for Media and Democracy, prwatch.org)
- This is both ironic and inaccurate as public relations is the practice of reputation and relationship management, both of which depend on accuracy and honesty.

The Demands of the Public Relations Profession

- To become a successful public relations practitioner, students must engage in hands-on, experiential learning.
 - *As stated by The Commission on Public Relations Education in their 2006 report, “Internships and other pre-professional work experiences have become essential in public relations education” (<http://www.commpred.org/reports/>).*
- In addition to internships, students take a course in developing public relations campaigns.

The Reality of the Public Relations Profession

- In addition to studying cases of past public relations campaigns, mastery requires developing a public relations campaign for an actual client.
- Thus, PRLS 4305 Public Relations Cases and Campaigns campaign proposal assignment is based on the *competitive agency model*.
 - Students work in teams of four to five members per team and “compete against each other to develop campaign proposals in the same way that real-world agencies compete for the business of prospective clients” (Bobbitt & Sullivan, 2005, p. xv). Specifically, the class is divided into four teams who present competing campaign proposals to a single client.

The Potential Impact of the Public Relations Profession

- By working exclusively with nonprofit clients, PRLS 4305 is also a service-learning course that is truly a win for all stakeholders.
 - *Students* gain valuable experience and see the potential of applying their emerging expertise to pressing social concerns and community problems.
 - *Community partners* gain valuable information to increase awareness, alter existing attitudes, and call specific audiences to take action in the forms of volunteering and donating.

The Potential Power of Service-Learning

- Service-learning occurs when students accomplish a course's learning objectives while also contributing to community needs.
- Through guided reflection, students also benefit from increased self-awareness and an enhanced ability to collaborate with others.
- Most importantly, students are exposed to substantive social issues in their communities and are empowered to apply their talents and skills to help solve them.

The Process of Service-Learning

- Faculty visits client on site
- In-class client interview
- Designated team liaisons
- Mandatory team site visits by mid-semester
- Mid-semester reflection
- Client proposals and presentations
- Celebration luncheon
- Final reflection

Community Partners Served

- **Arkansas Nonprofit Alliance**
- **Arkansas Symphony Orchestra**
- **Blackbird Academy**
- **Children's Advocacy Alliance of North Central Arkansas (CASA)**
- **Choosing to Excel**
- **Community Action Program for Central Arkansas (CAPCA)**
- **Community Connections**
- **Conway Interfaith Clinic**
- **Faulkner County Day School**
- **Independent Living Services**
- **Lions World Services for the Blind**
- **Mid-America Science Museum (MASM)**
- **THEA Foundation**
- **Union Rescue Mission**
- **Wolfe Street Foundation**

Course Learning Objectives

- **To develop a comprehensive public relations campaign proposal for an actual client.**
- **To define public relations as a strategic function of relationship management.**
- **To conduct and synthesize research to analyze the client's situation and core challenge.**
- **To create campaign goals and audience-specific objectives, messages, and tactics.**
- **To deliver a professional campaign presentation to the client.**

Using Our Powers to...

- Strengthen the nonprofit sector.
- Elevate the value of the arts and arts education.
- Raise awareness of existing social problems including child abuse and neglect, access to affordable health care, chronic and systemic poverty, addiction, and homelessness.
- Increase resources to disadvantaged populations such as those who are abused, addicted, disabled, or impoverished.

Service-Learning Resources at UCA

- **Website** - <http://uca.edu/servicelearning/>
- **Three units involved at UCA:**
 - Service-Learning Faculty Liaison –
Dr. Peter Mehl
 - Service-Learning Program Coordinator –
Jane Douglas
 - Service-Learning Faculty Development – IDC
- **Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program**

Emerging PR Professionals



Engaged Community Members



How Can You Use Your Powers for Good?

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