

# **Nine Years of Using Our Powers for Good:**

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

**Presented by  
Amy Hawkins, Ph.D., APR  
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](http://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?**

**Presented by  
Amy Hawkins, Ph.D., APR  
Spring 2014**