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A Curricular Needs Assessment Of Carroll College's Public Relations Program: Advancement Towards The 21st Century

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A CURRICULAR NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF CARROLL COLLEGE'S PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM: ADVANCEMENT TOWARDS THE 21st CENTURY

A SENIOR HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS TO GRADUATE WITH HONORS

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ABSTRACT

As the public relations (PR) profession grows in today’s work force, the issue of PR education generates controversy among both PR practitioners and educators. In the following pages, a collection of information regarding PR education is presented. The intent is that the research provided in this thesis will be used to revise Carroll College’s current PR program, enabling it to meet the needs of 21st century PR students, educators, and practitioners.

In Chapter I, the author first defines both PR and PR education, and explains specific reasons for discussing PR education at this time. This is followed by a comprehensive review of contemporary research on PR education. This section examines several issues in PR education: the pre-professional debate; the roles and expectations of PR practitioners; the appropriate academic department for the PR major; the roles and limitations of PR educators; and specific suggestions for change in PR curricula.

Chapter II explains and addresses Carroll’s present PR program, in light of the research and suggestions presented in Chapter I. This chapter includes background information on the program, as well as an explanation of Carroll’s current requirements for a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in PR. The chapter includes a synopsis of a survey of 13 junior and senior PR students at Carroll. These students evaluated each course in the Carroll PR
program and the program as a whole.

Chapter III is a proposal for change in Carroll's PR program. The recommendations in this chapter are based on the information presented and the suggestions offered in Chapters I and II. In this final chapter, the author first offers an interpretation of the student survey presented in Chapter II. The bulk of this chapter, though, is comprised of a five-year, three-phase proposal for the transformation of Carroll's current PR program. The author proposes a PR program that is conducive to Carroll's specialized needs and abilities as a private, liberal arts institution.
CHAPTER I: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to review the Carroll College PR program thoroughly, we must begin with a comprehensive examination of current research regarding PR education. Some of the following information comes from PR educators, practitioners, scholars, and students; some comes from various professional PR associations or organizations. The author will present several trends in PR education—the way it was, the way it is, and the way PR colleagues wish it to be—in hopes of reaching a clearer understanding of several facets of PR education.

Chapter I is divided into three main parts. The first part focuses on definitions of various PR-related words and issues, including the definitions of both PR and PR education, as well as the profile of the average PR student.

The second section of Chapter I is a detailed explanation as to the purpose of discussing PR education at this time. Three reasons are given: the growth of PR in the workplace, the growth of PR in academia, and the demand from PR educators, practitioners, and students for change in PR education.

The final section of this chapter is devoted to specific considerations for change offered by several individuals and groups who are closely related to PR education. These considerations include: the pre-professional debate; the roles and expectations of PR
practitioners; the appropriate academic department for the PR major; the roles and limitations of PR educators; and the specific suggestions for changes in PR curricula offered by educators, practitioners, and professional PR organizations.

This chapter enables the author to analyze Carroll College’s PR program in light of current research.

Definitions

Definitions of PR

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) defines PR as a management function responsible for "anticipating, analyzing, and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues which might impact" an organization (cited in Ehling, 1992, p. 458). A PR practitioner is, therefore, continually researching, planning, and implementing an organization’s efforts to meet and influence public opinion (Ehling, 1992).

Wakefield and Cottone (1986) affirm the importance of distinguishing between PR and publicity. In the past, PR and publicity were considered synonymous. These theorists, however, assert the two terms are related but clearly distinct. PR requires specific skills, only one of which is the ability to handle publicity. In other words, publicity is a specialty which PR generalists can choose to pursue. Therefore, publicity is no longer synonymous with PR, but instead fits under the umbrella of PR.
The Commission of Undergraduate Public Relations Education (CUPRE) claims that PR is rooted in a democratic society where people have the freedom to make decisions. Organizations depend on positive relations with those people whose decisions affect the "vitality and survival" of the organization (1987, p. 1). Therefore, PR is used to monitor and evaluate public opinion, so an organization can develop and implement products, decisions, and promotions which are mutually beneficial for the organization and the public. PR is thus seen as a relationship between an organization and its publics, where it is the organization's responsibility to achieve favorable relations with its constituencies (CUPRE, 1987).

In light of the above three definitions, an inclusive definition of PR might be: a specialized management function responsible for monitoring and analyzing public opinion, and then devising strategies to promote and explain the organization to that public.

Definition of PR Education

The above description of PR helps define the purpose of PR education, which is to effectively and efficiently teach basic PR principles, theories, and practices (CUPRE, 1987). PR education, then, provides the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the tasks and responsibilities of any and all PR activity (Ehling, 1992).
Profile of the Average PR Student

One last definition must be considered: the profile of an average PR student (O’Brien & Edwards, 1989). Neither gender dominates, as there are equal numbers of males and females who choose to study PR. Although many students study PR with the intent to pursue a career as a PR practitioner, only one in four PR graduates actually achieve a position in the field—research indicates students are more likely to acquire a career in marketing. Additionally, most PR students claimed their first choice was to study PR, which disputes the frequent assumption that people study PR because they have been defeated in some other discipline (O’Brien & Edwards, 1989).

The Importance of Discussing PR Education at This Time

Two main reasons exist that not only justify but demand the discussion of PR education right now. The first reason is that PR, both as a career and an academic discipline, has grown tremendously over the last 10 years. Secondly, PR practitioners and educators are demanding change in PR education.

Growth of PR in the Workplace

PR budgets and personnel are increasing in the workplace as management recognizes that strong PR services are a necessity, not a luxury. The United States Bureau of
Labor projects as much as a 44% growth in PR-related fields by 1995 (Wakefield & Cottone, 1986). Statistics show that 1,200 new PR positions become available each year (O’Brien & Edwards, 1989). Furthermore, a new demand for PR skills in business exists. An institution’s ability to "explain itself to the world" and communicate that message both internally and externally is becoming increasingly important (VanLeuven, 1989 and VanSlyke-Turk, 1986). Also, as the world becomes more complex, PR practitioners, just like engineers, doctors, and other professionals, are responding by seeking new ways to make a complicated, technically-advanced world make sense (Wakefield & Cottone, 1986).

Growth of PR in Academia

PR is a relatively new academic discipline and only gained attention when organizational management saw PR as essential for survival. Therefore, the growth of PR in the workplace has been accompanied by a corresponding growth in PR as an academic discipline.

The first legitimate university-level PR class was taught in 1923 at New York University by Edward Bernays. The class, entitled "PR Theory," initiated what is now the traditional theoretical approach to teaching PR (Smith, 1982). It was not until 1980 that PR education emphasized practical skills through internships, projects, and active participation in the PR field (Walker, 1984).
Thirty years ago one could not earn a degree in PR. Twenty years ago, only 12 college-level PR degree programs existed, typically requiring only one or two genuine PR courses (Wakefield & Cottone, 1986). However, today, hundreds of PR departments exist in American colleges and universities. A study of 3,201 universities and colleges completed by Neff (1989) revealed 580 different undergraduate departments listing PR courses. Within these departments, a total of 1,265 PR courses—with various titles—were taught in areas of communication, journalism, mass communication, PR, and business.

Just as the number of academic departments offering PR-related courses has increased, so has the number of students attracted to the PR discipline. In 1982, for example, a reported 10,000 students at 300 schools graduated with PR degrees (Smith, 1982). The number of students graduating in PR in 1989 had increased to nearly 21,000, doubling earlier figures in just seven years (Springston & Leichty, 1990). Today the number of PR students working towards a degree is estimated at more than 50,000 (PRSA). More and more colleges and universities are enrolling PR students, and this growth, as well as the growth of PR in the workplace, is expected to continue into the next century. The need to design a "more distinctive, comprehensive, and rigorous" program is apparent (VanLeuven, 1989).
Demand for Change in PR Education

The second reason for discussing PR education at this time is that both practitioners and educators across the nation are calling for change in many aspects of PR education. Practitioners, students, and educators are discussing changes in such aspects of PR education as specific course requirements, the placement of the PR major, areas of emphasis, and the various roles of PR educators, college administrators, and practitioners.

According to Wakefield and Cottone (1986), everyone has been talking about change for years, yet in most colleges and universities, few transformations have occurred. This is partially due to the time and financial commitment necessary to make the changes (Curtis, 1993). However, the main reason that few visible changes in PR education have occurred is because, while everyone agrees that changes need to be made, there is a discrepancy among PR associates about the exact nature of those changes (Wakefield & Cottone, 1986).

Yet, of 245 practitioners and educators, 92.2% feel PR education must be reconstructed to prepare students to meet the needs of the profession (Wakefield & Cottone, 1986). A similar study (cited in Kapula & Allen, 1982, p. 32) also indicates that as many as 92% of "leading practitioners and educators" agreed that PR education needs improvement.
As both PR education and professional practice prepare to enter a new decade, changes in the preparation of future practitioners and educators is not merely inevitable, but it is imperative (Kapula & Allen, 1982). Wakefield and Cottone (1986) sum it up by contending, "it is time to stop talking and take action" (p. 37).

Considerations For Change

In order to help clarify exactly what type of changes should be made in PR education, the remainder of Chapter I focusses on four areas to consider when making changes, ending with very specific suggestions for change in PR curricula proposed by various theorists.

The Pre-professional Debate

One ongoing debate about PR education is whether or not it should have a pre-professional or a theoretical foundation. Clearly, there are two PR communities. A struggle has developed between them regarding the structuring of PR education. One group, consisting mostly of PR practitioners and some educators, advocates focusing on pre-professional, technical, and applicable skills, believing the bottom line in evaluating a PR program should be how well graduates succeed in the job market (Botan, 1993 and Schwartz, Yarbrough, & Shakra, 1992). This job-based group recognizes great amounts of competition for PR jobs,
and believes educating students only in theoretical matter is ludicrous if one has no reality-based tools upon graduation. (O’Brien & Edwards, 1989).

However, others—notably scholars and liberal arts educators—value a strict theoretical base for PR curricula. These individuals believe that if a PR student has a solid, comprehensive understanding of theoretical material, then he or she will be able to apply that to any and all real-world PR situations (Botan, 1993). Additionally, this group feels that a "rich theoretical base" offers the most prosperity in the field, and one will not succeed in the workforce without such knowledge (Springston & Leichty, 1990, p. 9).

Each side of this debate has strong supporters; however, as we move into a new decade, more and more practitioners and educators are seeking middle ground. Most experts advocate PR education that embraces a continuum, with theory on one end and pre-professional experience on the other end.

Botan (1993) believes that by struggling against one another in this issue, PR associates are stalling attempts to improve PR education. Botan feels that both PR theory and practical experience are crucial in the educational process, and the two should work together to completely prepare students for PR careers. Similarly, Heath (1990) thinks that instead of teaching mainly theory or mainly pre-professional techniques, PR education should focus equally
on both as an "inter-relative," interdependent process (p. 12).

Neff (1989) agrees with Botan and Heath. She proposes an "integrative" approach to a PR curriculum, which relies on giving students an inclusive background in both theory and practical experience (p. 5). She states that anyone possessing comprehensive knowledge of PR theory without adequate pre-professional training--and vice versa--is at a loss and will fall behind in the workplace.

Springston and Leichty (1990) agree, arguing that neither theory nor practical experience should be excluded for the purpose of focusing on one or the other of them. To leave out either facet of PR training is limiting to the student. Well-rounded course work enables graduates to move beyond entry-level positions, where technical skills are critical, into upper levels of an organization, where greater knowledge of PR theory is essential.

Grunig (1989) defines a dual role of PR practitioners in the workplace. He maintains that a practitioner is a technician whose job description often includes writing, editing, photography, media relations, and journalism. Grunig also believes, however, that a PR manager needs to be able to conceptualize, direct, strategize, and theorize. Grunig concludes that to be effective, practitioners need both theory and real-life experience and should, therefore, be trained in both areas.
Colleges and universities offering a PR major or minor need to decide where the program should lie on the continuum of theory-versus-pre-professional preparation. Once that decision is achieved, O’Brien and Edwards (1986) recommend that the PR educators of the institution prepare a mission statement for the PR program and follow it in decision making.

PR Practitioners: Their Roles and What They Seek

When Hiring PR Graduates

Role of PR Practitioners in the Education Process

Another consideration when transforming a PR curricula is the practitioner role in PR education. In other words, to what degree should practitioners be involved in PR education? VanLeuven (1989) believes practitioners serve several roles. First, they help provide students with practical and technical experience by offering internships. Practitioners also offer professional exchanges for PR educators, which allow educators to update their understanding of real-world PR practices.

Furthermore, VanLeuven says practitioners should be brought into the classroom as guest lecturers and project leaders, bringing professional influence to course work. Practitioners can also extend financial support to PR education by helping prepare the next generation of their
chosen field. Finally, practitioners should be used to advise future direction for PR education (Grunig, 1989).

**What Practitioners Seek When Hiring PR Graduates**

Practitioners have a multitude of suggestions for PR students, including which major is best suited for a PR career, what courses are most desirable, and what skills are mandatory for success.

In a recent survey, Schwartz et. al (1992) found 25% of practitioners and CEOs in major PR firms believe a PR major is the best undergraduate preparation for a career in PR. However, 66% think a minor in PR combined with a major in either business, communication, or journalism is best. Only 11% recommend a strict liberal-arts major combined with a "professionally-related" minor.

Participants were further asked to rate 21 PR-related themes from most important to least important in PR education. The top 10 results were:

- writing
- internship experience
- problem solving
- media relations
- presentation skills
- people management
- liberal arts background
- trend/issue analysis
- research
- business/finance knowledge

Additionally, the survey results indicated that participants believe employers respond better to "direct, personal, and practical experience" (p. 21). Also, 75% of
the survey respondents felt PR students are unprepared for the realities of a career in PR.

Johnson (1993) surveyed 669 PR practitioners. His respondents identified the top five most desirable majors for a PR career as PR, journalism, liberal arts, marketing, and mass communication. Johnson’s respondents also indicated that they preferred four years of work experience, although less is often acceptable. Participants were further asked to consider what skills and abilities are most sought in new PR professionals. The most desired skills were:

- communication skills
- writing skills
- initiative
- enthusiasm
- flexibility
- friendly personality
- creativity
- team worker
- college degree
- work experience

Other studies relating to this issue show comparable results. VanSlyke-Turk’s (1986) study claims that PR graduates require future-oriented skills in planning, forecasting, trend analysis, researching, and applied PR techniques to succeed in obtaining a PR career.

Curtis (1993) also surveyed practitioners to see what attributes are most important. The top-rated results were: feature writing, internships, news reporting, organizational communication, and publicity.

Katz (1990) surveyed 407 members of professional PR
organizations and found that 55% felt ethics is the most important concept to teach PR students. Other important concepts suggested include writing (39%), communication theory (38%), persuasion theory (38%), strategic planning (36%), media relations (21%), and research methods (21%).

One final study (VanSlyke-Turk, 1989) asserts that management skills are essential for PR graduates. Management encompasses skills such as leadership, oral and written communication, strategic planning, goal setting, decision making, prioritizing, time management, and financial and budgeting skills, all of which are important in PR.

Where Does the PR Department Belong?

Once educators have made decisions about the appropriate mix of theory and pre-professional training and about the skills PR students need most to succeed in a PR career, it is important to determine which academic department is best suited as a base for the PR major, so the student is in a position to obtain the desired qualifications. The complexity of this issue is growing, and unfortunately, no clear resolution has been confirmed.

The PR major has traditionally been a "subsystem of other supersystems," meaning most schools do not have an independent PR department, but instead offer a PR major within another department, such as journalism or
communication (O’Brien & Edwards, 1989, p. 41). As a result, PR educators are simultaneously trying to meet the needs of their supersystem, yet desiring to break away from it to form a separate PR department. Thus, an ongoing "turf battle" has developed between departments (Springston & Leichty, 1990, p. 9).

Prior to 1975 nearly all PR graduates came from journalism departments where the emphasis was placed on print-media skills. However, journalism is no longer the primary provider of PR education. In 1989, only 21% of PR graduates came from journalism departments. At that time, communication departments housed most PR courses (O’Brien & Edwards, 1989). Neff (1989) reviewed 3,201 universities and colleges and found 580 undergraduate departments listing PR courses. Of these courses, 240 were in communication, and only 124 were in journalism. Later studies (Katz, 1990) showed communication departments housing 77% of all PR courses.

While communication and journalism are currently the popular departments for housing PR curricula, they are not the only choices with the ability to provide a PR major. Four options of where to place the PR major exist. The first choice among educators and theorists is to enable PR to stand alone as an independent department. If that is not possible, it should either be placed in the communication, journalism, or business/management department.
Independent PR Department. If it is possible, most PR associates wish to see the PR department stand alone. Falb (1992) believes that PR falls between communication, journalism, and business/management, but it is really none of them in itself. Falb says the problem with placing PR under any discipline's umbrella is that it is limiting to the students; it cuts them off from the roots of the PR discipline and ties them into the roots of another specialty.

Falb further states that positioning PR in another discipline does not serve the students' best interests, as it "inhibits their selection of courses more suited for their particular needs" (p. 98). Essentially, PR should be positioned as a "separate entity...able to take advantage of offerings" from other disciplines that "fit the particular needs of PR students" (p. 100).

Wakefield and Cottone (1986) see journalism and other disciplines as a "mother curricula" for PR (p. 38). They believe these other departments were initially used to establish PR, but that it is time for PR to break away and organize itself as a strong, independent specialty. Wakefield and Cottone assert that PR practitioners and educators can only gain control of curriculum and more realistically prepare future practitioners if the PR major is separated from other disciplines.
Grunig (1989) agrees, but maintains it does not matter where the PR department is positioned or if it stands on its own, so long as the PR department has the "autonomy to control its own curriculum and resources" (p. 21). Grunig adds that PR should not be scattered throughout the system, but should be focused in "one, tight, conceptual unit" (p. 21).

Communication Department. Neff (1990) argues that if PR cannot be an independent department, then it should be under the umbrella of communication. She feels effective PR relies on solid communication skills and techniques. Springston and Leichty (1990) claim, "Communication is the best road for the maturation of PR as an academic discipline" because it offers opportunity for "theoretical development and sophistication" (p. 1). Heath (1990), Walker (cited in Neff, 1990), and VanLeuven (1989) all believe PR relies on communication skills, and thus advocate placing the PR major in communication.

The argument against placing PR in communication stems from communication's customary orientation towards persuasion or rhetoric, as PR colleagues question the ethics of those two philosophies. PR affiliates do not want PR to be seen as unethical, nor do they wish PR practitioners to be considered professional persuaders (Neff, 1989).
Additionally, some experts wish to see PR break away from its traditional connection to communication. PR falls within the area of communication. However, each discipline is distinct in nature, and is not fully analogous in practice and theory with the other (Falb, 1992).

Journalism Department. Most theorists argue against placing the PR program within the journalism department, but at least one person sees both positive and negative in that choice. VanLeuven (1989) believes journalism is satisfactory because "understanding media is tied to various specialties in PR" (p. 7). However, VanLeuven’s first choice would be to separate PR from journalism because PR is not synonymous with journalism, as PR encompasses several other specialty areas as well.

Falb (1992) also disagrees with housing the PR major in journalism, saying the slow growth of PR curricula can be attributed to having been placed under the umbrella of journalism. Falb further states that journalism departments emphasize media and journalistic writing, yet PR is much more encompassing than that. O’Brien and Edwards (1989) agree that journalism is not the place for PR, because when trained in journalism, PR graduates lack understanding of business, graphics, and oral communication skills.
Business/Management Department. Falb (1992) says that PR is becoming part of the management process, and PR education should therefore be based on knowledge of business. Neff (1990) argues housing PR programs in the business department as well. She says it is critical for PR graduates to have management skills because effective PR relies on them.

However, Neff also points out disadvantages of this arrangement, saying a business orientation is limiting and will not provide PR graduates with a sufficient array of well-rounded skills to pursue a career. Heath (1990) also criticizes placing PR in business/management because PR serves many more interests than just business, and a business emphasis will not adequately prepare students for a successful PR career.

It is evident that no clear answers are provided by expert theorists. Where to place a PR major is ultimately left up to the school and the educators of the PR program. Hopefully, the PR educators will be allowed to make the decision.

The purpose of reviewing the above research is to acknowledge current trends. Beyond that, there is no conclusive guidance on this issue. PR colleagues advise examining the needs of the students as well as the ability of the college to meet those needs (Heath, 1990).
PR Educators: Their Roles and Limitations

Another consideration when changing PR education is the role and limitations of PR educators, who obviously have a significant function in PR education. In fact, Wakefield and Cottone (1986) contend the key to survival of PR education is increasing the number of and the adequacy of PR educators.

The 1987 Commission on Undergraduate PR Education (CUPRE) says a PR educator has the responsibility to provide thorough, conceptual knowledge of PR, and also to give "critical perspectives of conduct that comprise modern [PR] practice" (p. 13a). Further, educators must convey the nature of PR activity to students and explain the tasks and responsibilities of PR management. Educators must also provide an "intellectual perspective" of ethical standards and operations of PR (p. 13a).

Forbes and Butterfield (1993) conclude that educators should continue learning and researching PR. They should also attend seminars, persist in their writing efforts, and stay active in the PR workplace so as to enable effective PR teaching.

Clavier and Wright (1982) surveyed Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) teacher advisers and members of the PRSA educators section. Out of 108 responses, 66% feel it is important for PR educators to belong to professional organizations and to be accredited
members of these organizations. This is important for
keeping up on current PR trends, maintaining the ability to
adequately prepare students, and making contacts to benefit
the school's PR program and students.

It is clear that PR educators have a responsibility to
ensure appropriate and sufficient undergraduate preparation
to PR students. However, educators have certain limitations
in completing this task. First of all, there is a shortage
of several types of resources available to educators. The
low percentage of PR faculty at most schools inhibits growth
of the department, and increases demand upon the few (often
times only one) PR professors at any given institution
(Grunig, 1989). Furthermore, journalism and communication
educators are too often unwilling to allow PR to grow out of
its traditional subordinate position, resulting in the turf
battles mentioned earlier (as cited in Curtis, 1993).

Administrative support is also often difficult to gain.
Surveys show that college administrators are in a position
to respond positively to PR educators' requests for money,
equipment, or additional educators because of their
legitimate authority over institutional happenings. Also,
due to an administrator's involvement with institutional
advancement, most administrators recognize the importance of
effective PR. However, in day-to-day decision making, the
PR program is not an administrator's top priority.
Administrators are most likely to focus on the broad,
general goals of the college, not the specifics (Bevot, 1992).

Bevot also asserts that financial support is not available. Funding has not been equal to student interest and population in PR. Bevot says it is a PR educator's obligation, and often burden, to seek appropriate support for his or her department so he or she can make knowledgeable and appropriate decisions. PR educators need to assertively communicate their needs and tap all available resources to guarantee course offerings that meet the needs of students entering a dynamic marketplace (Bevot, 1992).

**Specific Suggestions for Change in PR Curricula**

Over the last 10 years, various PR-related groups and individuals have offered suggestions for the ideal PR curricula. The recommendations have ranged from very specific to general, but together they can be used as a guideline for transforming PR education. Two groups, the PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) and the 1987 CUPRE, have made proposals, along with various prominent PR theorists and educators.

**PRSSA**

The PRSSA was founded in 1968 and now has more than 5,000 students in 160 chapters nationwide. This student organization is a division of the PRSA, which is a
professional organization for practitioners, scholars, and educators. Along with the PRSA, the Student Society helps create standards for PR professionals, educators, students, and educational programs (PRSA).

Patruno (1992) says having an educator who is a member of the PRSA—accredited or not—or having a certified PRSSA chapter and program is helpful to students for many reasons. The PR marketplace is highly competitive. Students who complete PRSSA accredited programs obtain jobs faster and obtain the jobs they desire because it ensures they are entering the workplace with competent skills for entry-level PR work (Patruno, 1992).

Additionally, Patruno (1992) asserts educators who are PRSA accredited, or at least belong to PRSA, are more knowledgeable of current PR practices and have more connections and advantages to relay to their students. Colleges and universities who are PRSSA certified can successfully compete with other institutions by offering a comprehensive, prosperous PR program. Since the number of students interested in PR is soaring, it is especially important for institutions already offering a PR major to make that program a distinguished one (Patruno, 1992).

Shortly after foundation, the PRSSA set up requirements for chapter and program certification and gave existing PRSSA chapters three years to comply. Schools wishing to become PRSSA certified must meet the following
conditions. Colleges must offer the following:

1) a bachelor of arts in PR that is accredited by a national or regional accreditation association

2) a sequence of at least five recommended PR courses, initially proposed by CUPRE, which must be supplemented by courses closely allied to the field—the five course are:

- Principles of PR (theory)
- PR Techniques (writing, message dissemination, media networking)
- PR Research (for planning, evaluating)
- PR Strategy and Implementation (campaigns, case studies)
- Supervised PR Experience (internship, practicum).

Additionally, to establish a PRSSA chapter, at least 10 students must be involved, and one must have satisfactorily completed at least one PR course—others must affirm, in writing, their plan to enroll in at least one course. At least eight members have to be at or below junior level.

The chapter must elect a faculty adviser who is a full-time teacher of at least one PR course, and he or she must be a member of PRSA. The chapter must also elect one or two professional advisers who are members of PRSA, and one must be an accredited member. Lastly, the application must be endorsed by the president and four other members of a sponsoring PRSA chapter.

CUPRE

The Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education (CUPRE) has met three times. First gathering in
1975, the commission took a broad approach in developing suggestions, offering no substantial details. In 1981, the commission met for the second time to update their findings from 1975. While these two reports are helpful, the third report from CUPRE, published after the 1987 gathering, is current and highly detailed.

CUPRE suggests that a formal education in PR is essential for adequate preparation for a career in the field, and it encourages change in the present PR education system. The Commission asserts that the fundamental purpose of an undergraduate PR program is to provide students with a liberal-arts background as a base for PR-specialty classes. CUPRE specifies only course content, not course names (CUPRE, 1987).

The Commission surveyed 544 PR educators and practitioners. The results of the survey defined the following seven objectives of PR programs:

- to describe the state of PR and explain current knowledge
- to identify and integrate concepts and theories of PR
- to design and implement undergraduate PR program and organize faculty resources
- to teach ethical issues and the technical and strategic responsibilities of a practitioner
- to give a well-rounded liberal arts background
- to require an effective minor
- to progress from intro-level to more advanced courses (CUPRE, 1987).
Other results indicated the 10 most important liberal-arts subjects for PR students. They were, in order:

- English (three courses—two in composition)
- economics
- humanities (three courses)
- behavioral sciences
- political science
- history (two courses)
- sociology, mathematics (two courses)
- geography
- physical and biological sciences (three courses) (CUPRE, 1987).

Specifically, CUPRE recommends 65 semester hours in liberal-arts preparation. These hours should come from the subjects listed above. A minimum of 15 credit hours in courses with a PR identification is also suggested. CUPRE endorses the AEJMC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication) 90-hour-rule, which is based on 120 required credit hours for graduation in which 90 of them must be taken outside of the major area. Of the 90, at least 65 must be in liberal arts, and only 30 hours remain in the professional area (CUPRE, 1987).

Recommended courses for PR work should include at least one course each in theory, technique, research, strategy and implementation, internships, and one advanced course as well. The commission also advised that certain communication courses be included, such as a technical/production course (copy editing, graphics, photography, electronic media, public speaking), historical/institutional courses (law, ethics, history of communication), and communication process and structure
courses (interactive communication structure, processes of communication in various situations) (CUPRE, 1987).

A PR major should choose an effective minor, preferably business. Other suggested minors were English, social science, psychology, and speech/communication. Whatever minor is chosen, students are advised to take numerous business courses, such as marketing, management, economics, finance, business law, statistics, and accounting (CUPRE, 1987).

CUPRE offered suggestions for PR educators as well. It is advised that educators have prior, real-world experience in PR practice and, if possible, teaching. An advanced degree is also recommended. Furthermore, educators should continue their own development through professional PR associations and outside PR work (CUPRE, 1987).

Contributions From Theorists and Educators

Many theorists and educators have ideas and suggestions on how to change and improve PR education as well. Some of the suggestions are specific and some are more general. The consensus is that change in PR education is crucial. Another common thread is the call for a strong liberal-arts orientation, and also the need for periodic self-review (CUPRE, 1987). In the following section, the author will present several individuals' ideas about the reconstruction of PR education.
Walker. Walker completed a study in 1984 by examining previous research and catalog requirements for college PR programs. He asserts the most important element in a PR curricula is a "strong nuts and bolts class," which teaches the basics of PR. He suggests the class be one full year with one semester of theory and one semester of writing. The theory portion should introduce models of PR, law, ethics, logic, organizational publics, and what can be accomplished with a PR degree. More in-depth classes on these topics should follow. The writing portion should also be an introductory course covering news releases, public service announcements, radio/television scripts, advertising messages, and captions. Again, an advanced writing course is recommended for in-depth study.

Walker also recommends a senior level, seminar-style case-study course which examines one to four cases and applies previously learned theory to each of them. Walker strongly advises creativity and innovation in teaching style. This challenges and interests students, which helps stimulate original thought. Additionally, Walker advocates including the social and behavioral sciences to provide a truly liberal-arts background.

Heath. Heath (1990) advocates educating students to "perform a wide array of functions unique to the PR discipline" (p. 15). According to Heath, the ideal PR
curriculum provides a strong liberal-arts experience with required courses in subjects closely allied to PR, such as communication, psychology, political science, business, and management. He says this training is essential to the development of PR students, and will add depth and variety to one's education. This way a PR graduate has more career options but is still affiliated with PR. Lastly, Heath feels issues management is strongly tied to PR education because it "unites business and communication planning with a concern for defining and meeting standards of social response...and interests" (p. 3).

Kendall and Anderson. In 1986 Kendall and Anderson completed a study of 110 members of various accredited PR associations. They asked respondents for suggestions on PR course material, but did not consider any other aspect of PR education. Participants identified 10 subjects that should be included in PR education:

- marketing
- print communication and verbal processes
- publicity and media relations
- exposure to professional PR journals
- goal setting
- writing for communication and business
- electronic media
- ethics
- research and measurement
- problem analysis

Kendall and Anderson also found that PR practitioners and educators agreed on the two most important elements of PR education, which they identified as a mastery of language
and practical experience. Respondents were also concerned with English skills, internship experience, a business minor, a clear definition of PR and the role of PR, and a way to measure program effectiveness.

Kapula and Allen. Kapula and Allen (1980) surveyed 75 PRSSA chapters and offered several suggestions from the results. They determined PR education needs a greater emphasis on research tools, evaluation techniques, management skills, and basic writing and English skills. They further recommended adding courses dealing with issue identification, problem solving, and social-trends analysis. Also, they claim a business minor should be required of all PR majors—or at least more business-related courses should be included in the PR curriculum, such as management, marketing, economics, statistics, and computer techniques.

Katz. Katz (1990) conducted similar research on the needs of PR curricula. He also surveyed members of six PR-related associations, and got responses from 407 individuals. Participants suggested five ways to improve PR education:

- more integration with communication and business
- more practical work
- more theoretical research
- more humanities courses
- remove PR from the journalism department
Katz also concluded that an accredited program is helpful because it allows for the interaction between students, educators, and PR associates in the processes of gaining valuable introductions and resource materials. These interactions also help PR affiliates acquire various newsletters and journals, as well as receive a greater diversity of knowledge.

Forbes and Butterfield. Forbes and Butterfield (1993) examined the various teaching styles among PR educators. Specifically, they researched the importance of a seminar-style course to PR education. Seminars serve to increase students' understanding of complex ideas, issues, and values associated with PR practices. In a seminar format, students "bounce things off one another" and the educator acts only as a facilitator of the interaction between students (p. 7). This format is advised for all levels of students.

Fitch-Hauser and Padgett. Fitch-Hauser and Padgett (1989) emphasize the importance of internships, claiming they help students learn practical, real-world applications of course work (p. 1-2). They recommend every graduate complete at least two internships, although as many as four or five are preferred. An internship should provide "hands-on" experience that will further develop what a student has learned in the classroom (p. 1-2). Internships should be
structured like real jobs. Students should be closely supervised and have a mentor. This experience provides potential professional contacts for students. It is advised that PR educators keep a running list of available internships and make them widely accessible to students.

Chapter Conclusion

This research leads to specific conclusions about an exemplary PR program for students in the 21st century. First of all, the program would emphasize an appropriate mix of theory and pre-professional training. Secondly, the program would stress those skills which PR practitioners recommend, such as writing, communication skills, and internship experience. Also, local-area practitioners would be more involved in the program. This PR program would also stand independent from other disciplines, as a department in itself.

Furthermore, in this PR program, PR educators would have sufficient resources in the areas of personnel, finances, administrative support, and extracurricular opportunities. Specific curricular requirements would be included in this exemplary PR program also. The program would follow PRSSA and CUPRE guidelines as to the exact nature of the courses, and also exemplify additional suggestions offered by experts.
In order to recommend changes to Carroll's PR curricula, it is first important to study the dynamics of the program. Therefore, Chapter II is dedicated solely to Carroll's PR program. In this chapter, the author examines the background of the college's PR program as well as the current requirements to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in PR.

The bulk of this chapter is comprised of a three-part survey of 13 junior and senior PR students at Carroll. The first part of the survey is simply a rating of each required course. The second and third parts incorporate numerous open-ended questions where the students were asked to make specific judgements about the program and to make recommendations for change.

Background

In the fall of 1987, Carroll's Communication Department decided the college should implement a PR program. The department perceived a need for it based on the increased demand for PR in the workplace. Since no qualified PR educators were teaching at Carroll at that time, the program was built by incorporating classes from several other departments to provide an extensive liberal-arts background for PR majors.
In the PR major, there are currently two requirements from the fine arts department, three from the English department, four from the business department, two from the psychology department, two from the computer science department, and one each from the political science and the public administration departments. Furthermore, Carroll’s PR program has always been housed in the Communication Department. It is clear that communication skills are emphasized, as there are currently eight communication classes required for a PR degree.

The survey in this chapter is based on the PR requirements listed in the 1990-1991 and the 1991-1992 college catalog—not the general liberal arts requirements—which are the guidelines all seniors and most juniors followed. To earn a PR major, 66 semester credit hours of "interdepartmental studies" were required (Carroll College, 1990, p. 61). A PR minor had to take 39 credit hours of interdepartmental studies. Other requirements include either an oral comprehensive examination conducted by the entire Communication Department at the end of a student’s senior year, or a senior honors thesis (Carroll College, 1990 & 1991).

Since its beginning, only two courses have been added to Carroll’s PR curriculum. They are Introduction to PR and Communication Ethics. These classes are now required for
both majors and minors. Please refer to Appendix B for a complete list of current course requirements.

Why Consider Making Changes At This Time?

There are many reasons why Carroll should consider redesigning its PR program right now. First, with all the current discussion developing regarding PR education and the urgency to improve it, it is a prime time to re-evaluate the effectiveness of Carroll’s PR curricula. At this time, there is a multitude of expert research available to help guide the decision-making process of implementing change. Therefore, the transformation will be rational and logical, based on expert advice.

Another reason to make changes in the PR curricula is so Carroll can better prepare its students and also compete with other schools—similar to Carroll in size and nature—offering PR degrees. It is important for any institution to keep up with current trends. Updating Carroll’s PR program would enable the school to prepare its PR students for a prosperous career in PR, and thus gain a positive reputation in the PR discipline.

A final reason to consider making changes in the PR program is that 13 of Carroll’s junior and senior level PR students, as surveyed in this thesis, agree that Carroll’s PR program needs to be updated.
Survey

Dynamics

The survey is divided into three sections. Each of the individual sections relies on the entire survey for its clarity. In other words, one section of the survey alone does not sufficiently explain the results of the entire survey, so it is important to view the sections as part of a greater whole. The first section involves 22 questions, which ask participants to rate each required PR course as either "very valuable," "valuable," or "not valuable." The scores from this rating were compiled to produce a composite rating for each course.

The second section of the survey consisted of six open-ended questions where each participant was asked to make specific judgments and offer suggestions about Carroll's program, and then explain his or her answers. The third section is a summary of a follow-up group discussion between the writer and six of the respondents to further address the survey.

Population

A total of 13 students were surveyed. Eleven (85%) were seniors, and two (15%) were juniors at the time of the survey, November, 1993. One (8%) of the students is strictly a PR major; eight (62%) are both PR and
communication majors (Carroll's curriculum is such that if one is already pursuing a PR degree, only two additional courses and any three extra communication credits are required to add a major in communication); three (23%) are communication majors with PR minors; and only one (8%) is a PR minor with another, non-PR related major.

Ten of the participants are female, and 3 are male. Please note that students' names are withheld for confidentiality.

Limitations of Qualitative Research

As with all qualitative research, there are certain limitations. The author is aware of these limitations, and has made efforts to be as thorough and accurate as possible. The survey must be taken simply for what it is--student evaluations of the Carroll PR program. Additionally, the surveyed students have not yet completed the PR program, so their judgements are based on the portion of the program they had completed when surveyed in November.

Obviously the results of the survey do not reflect every student in the PR department, but instead are opinions of a representative sample of juniors and seniors who have been active in the program and have shown concern for the survival and success of it. The follow-up discussion, explained in Section III, was designed to identify possible bias among the respondents and in the survey itself. The
findings of this session confirmed the students' responses from when they took the survey. The author is thus confident in the accuracy of these responses, and feels the overall results are valid.

Section I

Table 2.1 lists every course required for a PR major who entered the program between 1990-1992. An "(M)" following a course title indicates the courses that were required for a PR minor. Not every participant has taken every course thus far, so the number of students answering each question in this first section varies and is indicated in the second column of the chart, after the name of the course (ie. 12/13 means 12 students of 13 responded for that course). The following three columns show a series of percentages. The first column represents the percent of students who felt the respective class was "very valuable (VV)" to their PR curriculum. The second column indicates the percentage who thought the course was "valuable (V)," and the final column indicates the percentage of students who believed the class was "not valuable (NV)."

The courses are listed in ranked order by their composite scores, from ones that are considered most beneficial to ones that students regarded as least beneficial. To rank them, the author multiplied the percentages in the first column by four, the percentages in
the second column were multiplied by three, and the third-
column percentages were multiplied by one, due to the fact
that "not valuable" has a negative implication. All three
scores were then added together to give each course a
composite rating, which appears in the final column on the
chart, labeled "Comp."

Two new requirements, Communication Ethics and
Introduction to Public Relations, are not listed. Junior
and senior-level students who entered the PR major between
1990 and 1992 were not required to take those two courses.
Many students, however, chose to comment on those courses in
the second section of the survey. Please note that "Comm."
stands for communication in the following table.

Many trends can be found by examining Table 2.1. For
evaluation of the results, the author has divided the course
list into four groupings—most beneficial, generally
beneficial, beneficial, least beneficial—based on the
composite course ratings. This break down of the 22 courses
into four categories is only an initial analysis of the
results, showing the average feeling of survey participants
towards each course. It allows the author to determine
which courses, in general, students feel are most and least
beneficial to their PR training. However, examining the
composite score of each course in relation to other courses
allows for a more detailed analysis.
# TABLE 2.1

## GROUP 1: MOST BENEFICIAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>#/#13</th>
<th>VV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>NV</th>
<th>Comp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Comm. (M)</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion/Conflict</td>
<td>6/13</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm. Intern.</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Mgmt.</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Comm.</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Comm. (M)</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org. Comm. (M)</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Writing (M)</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GROUP 2: GENERALLY BENEFICIAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>#/#13</th>
<th>VV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>NV</th>
<th>Comp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>12/13</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Writing</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Computers (M)</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Admin.</td>
<td>10/13</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Admin. &amp; Pol.</td>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing (M)</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GROUP 3: BENEFICIAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>#/#13</th>
<th>VV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>NV</th>
<th>Comp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository Writing</td>
<td>10/13</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comp. Apps. in Bus.</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm. Seminar (M)</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GROUP 4: LEAST BENEFICIAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>#/#13</th>
<th>VV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>NV</th>
<th>Comp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Psych.</td>
<td>8/13</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Psych. (M)</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Media (M)</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design (M)</td>
<td>10/13</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group 1—Most Beneficial

Let us begin by exploring the first grouping of nine courses, labeled as "Group 1—Most Beneficial." These courses, compositely rated from a perfect 400 to 364, include Small Group Communication, Persuasion/Conflict Management, Communication Internship, Human Resource Management, Interpersonal Communication, Basic Communication, Organizational Communication, Media Writing, and Management.

These courses each earned comparatively high composite ratings compared to other courses. Students indicated these classes are the most beneficial of all courses in the PR department.

The three courses considered most beneficial by students are Small Group Communication (400), Persuasion Conflict Management (400), and Communication Internship (389). Following this, the score drops by 11 points to Human Resource Management and Interpersonal Communication (both at 378), Basic Communication (377), Organizational Communication (373), and Writing for the Media (370).

Each of these high-scoring, most beneficial courses scored 0% in the "not valuable" column. In other words, no one rated any of these nine courses as "not valuable."
Group 2—Generally Beneficial

The middle six courses, labeled as "Group 2--Generally Beneficial," are Photography, Business Writing, Basic Computers, Public Administration, Public Administration and Politics, and Marketing. These courses have medium composite scores, ranging from 326 to 285.

The reason these courses landed in the upper-middle of the composite rating column is mainly because the percentages initially assigned to them as either very valuable, valuable are more moderate in range. Also, the percentages reveal less consensus than responses to the courses in Group 1.

The top course in this group is Photography (326). Following this, there is a large decrease in composite score--by 16 points--to Business Writing (310). The next four courses are Basic Computers (305), Public Administration and Politics and Public Administration (both at 300), and Marketing (285).

Group 3--Beneficial

The next group of three courses is labeled "Group 3--Beneficial." The three courses in this group are Expository Writing (280), Computer Applications in Business (278), and Communication Seminar (270). The percentage ratings in each of the initial columns are more evenly distributed and not so clearly defined as they are in the first category. This
puts these classes in the lower-middle level of the rating column. Therefore, these three courses are not considered to be as beneficial as other courses, but they are not seen as worthless either, meaning they are valuable to some extent.

This category only has three courses in it. However, due to the fact that there is a 20-point difference between the last course in this group and the first course in Group 4, it did not seem fair to label these courses as least beneficial.

**Group 4—Least Beneficial**

Finally, the last group of four courses is labeled "Group 4—Least Beneficial." The four courses, compositely ranging from 250 to 180, are Social Psychology (250), General Psychology (246), Mass Media (237), and Design (180). These four courses were compositely rated by students as least beneficial. Their scores are low because the percentages in the very valuable column were the lowest out of all the courses, and their scores in the not valuable column were, overall, high.

**Section II**

The above results alone do not give enough insight to justify major changes in requirements for the PR major. However, when coupled with the responses from the open-ended
questions in this section, it becomes clear what changes the students feel should be instituted in the PR curriculum.

In this section, the author explains the results from the second section of the survey, which is comprised of six open-ended questions. Each participant answered each question, but there was opportunity to offer more than one suggestion in response to some of the questions. The conclusions are represented strictly by the percentage of people who offered and agreed with various judgements and suggestions. Furthermore, the author quotes specific responses to the questions. The quotes are expressed verbatim, without editing for grammar.

The author first presents the raw-data results of each question, and then lists specific quotes from the surveys. In some instances, students simply provided a one word answer, so quotes would be irrelevant.

The six open-ended questions were:

- Which of the above classes would you delete from the current requirements and why?

- Which of the classes do you consider repetitive of other classes? (Meaning, you studied the same "stuff" in each.)

- Given the above classes, do you feel you have been adequately prepared to obtain a career in PR? Why or why not?

- How can the Carroll College PR department better prepare its students for a career in PR?

- What do you feel is missing from the current PR curriculum at Carroll?

- Why did you choose to study PR at Carroll?
Question # 1: Which of the above classes would you delete from the current requirements in PR and Why?

Six of the 13 (46%) students surveyed feel Design should be deleted, and two (15%) feel Social Psychology should be dropped. This is initially indicated in Section I, where both courses were in Group 4 and considered comparatively less valuable than other courses. One person (8%) thinks photography should be deleted. Here is a sampling of what was said:

- "Design—I learned almost nothing."
- "Design...not have a lot to do with the major. Or if [it does], it is not apparent to me."
- "Design/Photography--good for inducing creativity, but not directly applicable."
- "Social Psychology--Everything in S.P is duplicated in Interpersonal Comm. and Small group Comm."
- "Social Psychology seems to repeat a lot of General Psychology."

Four (31%) of 13 feel Expository Writing should be dropped. Here are a few quotes from them:

- "Expository Writing--not applicable."
- "Expository Writing...not have a lot to do with the major."
- "Expository--not related."

Three (23%) people thought Communication Seminar should be deleted. Here is what a few of them said:

- "Communication Seminar--not related."
- "Communication Seminar--I can’t see how this applies to PR in a practical sense."

Other courses which individual students suggested eliminating were, Mass Media (8%), Computer Applications in Business (15%), Marketing (8%), and Introduction to Public
Administration (8%). Following are a portion of quotes from them:

- "Mass Media should either be deleted or changed."
- "Computer Applications in Business [doesn't] have a lot to do with the major."
- "Marketing--this would be good if there were projects or something."

Question #2: Which of the classes do you consider repetitive of other classes?

Five of the 13 students (38%) wrote that four courses are highly repetitive: Social Psychology, General Psychology, Interpersonal Communication (IPC), and Small Group Communication. The following are various quotes from the students:

- "Social Psychology--repeat of IPC, General Psychology, and Small Group."
- "Social Psychology is a lot of cross over with IPC."
- "IPC=Social Psychology=Small Group=General Psychology."
- "Everything in Social Psychology is duplicated in IPC and Small Group Communication."

Other courses were mentioned as repetitive also. Survey of Computer Science was noted by three (23%) students as being too similar to Computer Applications in Business. Two (15%) students simply wrote the name of these two courses, but one student (8%) commented, "Computer Applications in Business had a lot of computer information from Introduction to Computers."
Additionally, five (37%) people thought Fundamentals of Management and Human Resource Management (HRM) were redundant, because in the Fundamental's class one whole segment is devoted to HRM. Students said:

- "Fundamentals of Management and Human Resource Management contain much of the same material, but each had some uniquely important information."
- "Human Resource Management and Management are repetitive classes."

Two (15%) people said a lot of class material overlaps, but they felt that was okay. Here is what these students said:

- "Each [class] has uniquely important information."
- "They all have a slightly different focus."

Only one (8%) person does not feel any of the courses are repetitive.

Question #3: Given the above classes, do you feel you have been adequately prepared to obtain a career in PR? Why or why not?

There were a variety of responses to this question. Four of the 13 people surveyed said yes, three said no, and six said they could not decide if they had been prepared or not.
The four people (31%) who felt well prepared for a PR career said:

- "I feel well rounded in all aspect of academia."
- "I feel the CC has prepared me, but I think it was more because of my direct work experience in the PR department."
- "Yes, I feel the education I received was very well-rounded and covered many different and important aspects of PR."
- "Yes, but only because I took Introduction to PR, of course."

Three students (23%) clearly stated they did not feel adequately prepared for a career in PR. Here is what they said:

- "No. I learned a lot of theory, but very little practical application."
- "No, I can’t even define PR. I do believe I got a well rounded education...but its lacking highly in PR work."
- "I could have been better prepared had I been more exposed to "hands-on" PR work."

Five (38%) students could not decide if they felt prepared for a PR career or not. They wrote:

- "Yes and no. We’ve had a lot of theory. I feel as if I need more practical stuff."
- "I’m not sure I know what PR is having only one class actually in PR."
- "We are getting classes in every area, but there are other classes that we could use more experience in."

Question #4: How can the Carroll College PR department better prepare its students for a career in PR?

Many of the answers to this question overlapped. Eight students (62%) said, in his or her own way, they wanted, "more real-life experience," "more hands-on experience,"
"more internships," "more practical stuff," "more projects," because these would enhance their training. The general consensus was, if students could participate in more of these real-world options, they would be able to explore more of their interests and actually learn the "how to" material they need for a career. Here is a sampling of what students said:

- "With the nature of the major being so broad, I think students need to explore their individual career interests."
- "By providing students with more hands-on learning—working on actual PR projects..."
- "More hands-on experience like in Introduction to PR."
- "Making internships directly related to PR work would be very beneficial."
- "More actual PR work—perhaps in the community."
- "More hands-on experience. Maybe jobs we could do for the public for practice, even things for C.C. projects."
- "Promote more internships. I often hear of opportunities that are called in...that get no feedback. We need more on the ground preparation. Someone at Carroll should follow up on these opportunities."

Four students (31%) suggested placing greater emphasis on certain academic areas, such as writing, mass media skills, equipment, and technology, public speaking, and a senior-level PR seminar course. Some things students said were:

- "More writing for the media, so we could look and other types of writing."
- "More experience with public speaking."
- "Study of T.V. and Radio media at work."
- "Exposure to mass media equipment and mass media technology."
- "PR class at senior level—other than the communication-based seminar."
Eight (62%) respondents displayed their concern for the lack of "real" PR courses. They said:

- "More PR classes (technique, theory, writing—all separate.)"
- "Definitely needs more classes that are strictly PR."
- "Hire adjunct professors to teach PR courses—teachers here focus on Communication."
- "Offer more strictly PR classes."
- "Some sort of PR orientation would be helpful."
- "PR as a field is [not] discussed, at least it hasn't been a topic in any of my classes...if I hadn't interviewed a PR person for [another class], I would have no idea what a career in PR means."

Other suggestions were also offered. Two students (15%) thought feedback from recent graduates would be helpful to learn what kinds of career opportunities are available in PR. Another student expressed concern as to whether or not communication professors are aware of course content in courses from other departments, saying, "Have the PR department more aware of what other classes in other departments are teaching."

Three students (23%) thought reinstating the PR Club would be beneficial. Here are quotes from what they wrote:

- "...[getting] the PR club back in action might be a good idea."
- "PR club."
- "PR club would help people see what PR is really about."
Question #5: What do you feel is missing from the current PR curriculum at Carroll?

Students offered several answers to this question that overlap responses to question #4. For that reason, the author highlights the various, but often duplicate, responses. The author does not, however, provide specific quotes in every section regarding this question, because many people wrote "see above," or gave the same response.

One person (8%) said he would like to see more "professionally based" preparation. Six (46%) students feel there is not enough emphasis on actual PR techniques, practices, and theory.

Students also think quite a few classes are missing from the curriculum. Four (31%) respondents called for an upper-level, more advanced PR course, such as PR Seminar. One student said, "PR Seminar--not Comm. Seminar--it has nothing to do with PR"

Five students (38%) wanted a more advanced media/PR writing course. Five students (38%) felt a computer graphics/desktop publishing course was long overdue, and one student said, "PR people often need [desktop publishing] skills to make brochures, pamphlets, etc., and we aren't learning that stuff."

Four (31%) students think PR majors should be required to take a statistics course. Furthermore, one student (8%) indicated that a PR-ethics course is missing.
At least five students (38%) would like to learn how to find PR jobs, or how to prepare resumés and application letters, or prepare for interviews for an entry-level PR position.

Question #6: Why did you choose to study PR at Carroll?

Eight of the 13 people surveyed (62%) said the classes offered in the PR major sounded interesting. Typical responses included:

- "I think it's interesting and can create good job opportunities."
- "The topic has always interested me."
- "Because I liked the classes that were required."
- "I liked the variety of classes required for the major."

Seven people (54%) commented that the requirements to obtain a PR major were broadly based and adaptable to many professions. They felt they would learn skills to succeed in careers in many different areas because of the broad scope of classes:

- "Because it can be used for a variety of different occupations."
- "...very broad range, which I felt would be adaptable to many types of jobs, not just PR."
- "It sounded and looked broad, and I did not have a specific field in mind."

One of the students (8%) said "Professor Northup" was the reason she joined the PR program--Northup had spoken to her and suggested she give PR a try.
Three students (23%) said they chose PR because of previous influences or jobs. They said:

- "I chose PR because of an influence in high school, but I wouldn’t have chosen Carroll to study PR if I had known more about the program. I would have gone somewhere else or chosen a different major at Carroll."
- "I wanted to move up in [Public Information] and felt I needed a degree."

Another student said she enjoyed her classes, but was not sure how PR-related they were. This same student is a senior and said, "I’m still not sure what I am qualified to do."

Two students (15%) chose PR because it was a good complement to another major. One student said, "I chose PR because having a PR major/minor complements nicely with a Communication degree and is easy to obtain when doing communication."

Section III

This section of the survey is not as extensive or detailed as the other two parts. Six students met with the author and had a discussion regarding Carroll’s PR program. Unfortunately, not all of the students surveyed could attend this follow-up session.

The main reason the researcher did this follow up was to check for credibility of the survey. The researcher wanted to check the reliability of the test by determining if people responded the same way in the discussion as they
did on the survey. To do so, the researcher reworded a few of the open-ended questions and received very similar answers. Another reason the researcher held this discussion was to clarify some of the responses to the initial survey.

The first question the researcher asked is, "What is the biggest problem you see with Carroll's PR program, and how do you propose solving it?" The six students reached a consensus on this question. They said the biggest problem with the PR major is its lack of PR emphasis. These students were fairly cynical about the fact that they are supposedly studying PR, yet only one or two of their classes have been PR-oriented. In fact, they felt much more competent in their communication skills, business/management skills, and writing skills. While they recognize the importance of those skills in PR, group members still resented their lack of formal PR training.

Everyone had suggestions on how to solve this problem; however, most of the responses are analogous to the ones addressed in Section II of this chapter. A few people, however, offered suggestions that did not surface in the survey. One person said Carroll really needs a professor who is dedicated solely to PR--someone who can teach real-world PR and also the theoretical and technical elements. When asked if Carroll should hire a full-time PR professor, the group robustly answered, "Yes!"
The group discussed the Communication Department’s budget and whether or not hiring another person is feasible. The students agreed that, although Carroll may not be able to hire someone immediately, the Communication Department and the school should pursue a long-term goal of hiring a full-time PR professor. The group believed adjunct professors could help in the short term.

Additionally, the group addressed other ways to incorporate more actual PR into Carroll’s current liberal-arts based PR curriculum. One student suggested converting the PR major into a core set of requirements for every person, but then creating several options for an area of concentration, such as advertising, journalism, mass media, events coordination, art/graphics/desktop publishing, etc. Each student would have the same basic PR requirements to fulfill, but then could choose at least one—or possibly all—areas of concentration. We discussed whether or not this type of system would work at Carroll, and the consensus was that, eventually, it would work well. However, the group felt it would take a few years to establish such a program, and that Carroll’s PR program has more immediate needs.

The last issues the group discussed were CUPRE’s suggestions and PRSSA requirements for certification, as covered in Chapter I. The researcher explained both associations’ recommendations, and asked if the group
thought the advice is realistic for Carroll. The group believes the five PR courses required for PRSSA certification and the suggestions from CUPRE would be very appropriate for Carroll and not too difficult to implement.
Chapter III: A Proposal for Change

Chapter III serves to propose a complete five-year, three-phase, plan for the reconstruction of Carroll College's PR program. The hope is that, with the use of this proposal, Carroll will advance its PR curricula into the 21st century with a program in accord with its position as a private, liberal-arts institution.

Before any recommendations are given, however, the author offers an interpretation of the survey results presented in Chapter II. Following this interpretation, the three-phase plan for redesigning Carroll's PR program is discussed. Phase I of the plan focuses on changes that could take place immediately, perhaps before the next academic year, 1994-1995. Phase II targets short-term changes that could be implemented in one to two years. And finally, Phase III is a long-term plan, which could be implemented in five years, by the year 2000.

The recommendations in each phase are based on either scholarly guidelines from Chapter I, student evaluations from Chapter II, or both. The author imposes little personal commentary, but instead interprets and combines the research from both chapters. It is important to note that the author intends to use PRSSA and CUPRE recommendations as the basis for Carroll's PR program. Thus, the proposal is a step-by-step plan to realize PRSSA and CUPRE recommendations.
Interpretation of the Survey Results

It is clear that the group of 13 students surveyed has both positive and negative feelings towards Carroll's PR program. Although it may appear the negative ones are emphasized, the purpose of this survey is to discern what areas of the PR program students are dissatisfied with, to identify where change is, in their view, essential, and to obtain their ideas for change. For that reason, the questions on both the initial survey and in the follow-up session were sometimes geared towards identifying apparent problems with Carroll's PR program.

Based on the results of the student survey, it is apparent that Carroll's PR program needs redesigning. Although most of the courses are considered to be valuable, there are notable exceptions. Students are required to take courses they feel are not only repetitive, but also not related to PR. The students seem to enjoy the diversity of their course work, yet they imply their time and money would be better spent on a program with greater PR emphasis. Furthermore, there are students in the survey who believe they have not been adequately prepared for a career in PR, and most students expressed a preference for a more formal PR education.

The good news is that implementing the students' suggestions would not be overly difficult. The curriculum could be improved by simply extracting a few courses, and
replacing them with different courses, such as ones with more PR-relevance and, eventually, ones geared towards PRSSA certification. In addition, it would be relatively easy to improve internship opportunities and/or to start a program where PR students perform work for the community or for campus clubs, organizations, and events.

However, long-term plans would be required for handling other suggestions, such as hiring more PR faculty or creating a core set of courses with concentration areas. Implementing these recommendations would take a great deal of planning from the Communication Studies Department and tremendous support from Carroll’s administration.

Proposal

Phase I: Immediate Changes

This section of the proposal consists of recommendations for immediate change in Carroll’s PR curriculum. Four specific goals are within immediate reach:

- creating a mission statement for the PR program that could be followed in decision making
- deleting course requirements that are either irrelevant to PR or redundant of other courses
- replacing deleted courses with ones from the same discipline, but with greater relevance to the PR major
- introducing courses into the PR program that are better suited for PR majors than the courses which were deleted.
First, the author offers general suggestions for immediate change. The second section of Phase I is divided into three parts: 1) a list of three courses to be deleted with no substitution; 2) a list of three courses to be deleted with a replacement from the same department that is more appropriate for a PR major; 3) a list of three new courses which could be introduced into the curricula.

Please refer to Appendix C for a complete synopsis of Phase I.

General Suggestions

Before explaining specific suggestions for meeting curriculum goals in Phase I, the author presents general, overall suggestions for immediate attention.

In Chapter I, we noted that O'Brien and Edwards (1986) advised PR educators to make a decision about where their school’s PR curriculum falls on the theoretical versus pre-professional training continuum. When that decision is made, PR educators should prepare a mission statement for their PR program, and follow it in further decision making. Accordingly, Carroll College’s PR educators should begin the process of redesigning the PR program by discussing their options about where the program lies on that continuum, and compose a mission statement.

Furthermore, the research for this thesis uncovered no persuasive reason to move the PR program away from the
Communication Studies Department to any other department. In Chapter I, we acknowledged Neff’s (1990) belief that effective PR relies on solid communication skills and techniques. Other researchers, such as Heath (1990) and VanLeuven (1989) agree. Although these three researchers prefer an independent PR program, they assert the next best choice is communication. Additionally, the students surveyed in Chapter II indicated that the Carroll PR program has more immediate needs for internal transformation than it does for independence. Independence may become more important in the future, if Carroll’s PR program should become stronger and more populated.

Additionally, as seen in Chapter I (Schwartz et. al, 1992; Johnson, 1993; CUPRE, 1987; PRSSA), the best preparation for a PR graduate is a broad curriculum with a liberal-arts emphasis. The author concurs with the above researchers and suggests that it is best to continue Carroll’s broadly-based, liberal-arts PR curriculum. While the following recommendations are aimed at maintaining the program’s current liberal-arts emphasis, PR students recommended the deletion of courses that are not relevant to the PR discipline, and the substitution of courses which will enhance the student’s PR training.

Finally, the following suggestions meet CUPRE standards. CUPRE suggests, that out of 120 credit hours required for graduation, at least 90 of the hours must be
taken outside the professional area, which would be PR. Carroll requires 46 credits of General Liberal Arts Requirements. The remaining hours outside of strict PR training would come from within the major, but would not be concentrated PR courses. They will instead be from areas related to PR that enhance PR training, such as communication, business, and writing.

Courses to be Deleted

Based on the survey results presented in Chapter II, the author proposes deleting six courses. The following is a justification for the deletion and/or substitution of the six courses. The first list of three courses could be deleted without substitution from their discipline. The second list of three courses are also to be deleted, but these courses could be replaced with a course from the same department that is more appropriate to PR education. Directly following each course that could be deleted is the one that could replace it in the redesigned PR curriculum.

Please note each of the following courses that could be immediately substituted are courses that already exist at Carroll and are taught either every semester or every other semester. No completely new courses, requiring additional educators, will be proposed in this section. This part will mainly be, then, a reworking of the required credits for a PR major.
Courses to Be Deleted Without Substitution

- **Human Resource Management**: Although Human Resource Management (HRM) scored very high in the composite rating, 37% of the students surveyed believed it to be repetitive of Management, noting that one whole section in Management comprehensively covers HRM. This course need not be replaced with any similar one.

- **Public Administration and Politics**: This course also scored well compositely (300), but students also felt it to be repetitive of Introduction to Public Administration or that it was not applicable to PR. This course also should not initially be replaced with another similar one.

- **Social Psychology**: This course scored very low in the composite rating (250), and it was cited over and over by students that it is completely repetitive of General Psychology, Small Group Communication or Interpersonal Communication. Students said everything covered in Social Psychology is already covered in one, two, or all three of the other courses. This course also need not be replaced with another.

Courses to Be Replaced With More PR-Appropriate Ones

- **Deletion 1: Expository Writing**: Although this course did not score terribly low in the composite ranking, with a 280, it was suggested by 31% of the students that Expository Writing is not in any way relevant to their PR training. This course could be replaced with Technical Writing.

- **Substitution 1: Technical Writing (EN325)**: This course is proposed to replace Expository Writing. Technical Writing explores advanced techniques in writing analyses, reports, and proposals. Experts say writing is among the most important skills for a PR practitioner. Practitioners recommend graduates have skills in problem solving, research, and strategic planning (Johnson, 1993 and Schwartz et. al, 1992). Technical writing would give PR
students experience in writing documents relevant to all of the above.

• **Deletion 2**: **Design**: Design was at the very bottom of the composite ranking with a score of 180. Further, 46% of the students surveyed remarked that the class is irrelevant to PR. Students suggested a more appropriate course for PR majors would be a course in desktop publishing. This course could be replaced with Pagemaker.

• **Substitution 2**: **Pagemaker (AT108)**: This class is proposed to replace Design. It is an introductory-level course in desktop publishing, which would be, according to students, be much more beneficial to their education.

• **Deletion 3**: **Computer Applications in Business**: Many students commented that this course was extremely repetitive of the required Basic Computers course. While, experts say business skills are important in PR, the author believes that because this course is so repetitive, it would be more beneficial to PR students to instead take a different business-oriented course.

• **Substitution 3**: **Introduction to Business (BA100)**: As seen in Chapter I, practitioners assert that in order to succeed in the workforce, PR students need to acquire a greater amount of business knowledge (VanSlyke-Turk, 1989). This class is designed to strengthen the understanding of today’s business vocabulary and issues.

**Courses to Be Introduced Into the PR Curriculum**

The following is a list of three courses the researcher suggests might be introduced into Carroll’s current PR curriculum. Each of them is presently taught at Carroll. No new educators would need to be hired, and no new classes would need to be established. For that reason, the changes
would be fairly simple to implement. These recommendations are proposed with the awareness that two additional courses (Introduction to PR and Communication Ethics) were added to the curriculum as of the Fall semester of 1992.

- **Elementary Statistics (MA207):** Not only did two students remark that Carroll’s PR program lacked a statistics course, but experts also say trend analysis and research are important skills, both of which require statistical examination (Schwartz et. al, 1992 and VanSlyke-Turk, 1986).

- **Survey of Economics (EC105):** Experts advise that PR graduates have knowledge of economics (Schwartz et. al, 1992 and VanSlyke-Turk, 1986). Currently, Carroll students do not take a class that deals with the issues of economics. This is a basic course designed for majors outside of economics, and would be well-suited as an introductory economics course for PR majors.

- **Career Internship (CO425):** The author believes two internships would be more beneficial than one. PR practitioners wish to hire a graduate with one to four years of experience (Johnson, 1993). Many other colleges require a total of two or three internships of PR graduates (Neff, 1993). Carroll students will not be able to compete successfully in the workforce if they only have one year of experience. Further, students in the survey said they want more hands-on, practical experience. One way Carroll can provide them that experience at low cost and low maintenance is to require an additional internship.
Phase II: Short-Term Changes

Phase II will examine specific areas that could be addressed in the next one to two years. This section of the proposal could be implemented as quickly as the Fall semester of 1996. The particular goals of this phase are:

- to begin the process of PRSSA certification by adding two of its recommended PR courses, hiring additional PR faculty, and establishing a strong PR club
- to include local Helena PR practitioners as well as PR alumni in the PR education process at Carroll.

Please refer to Appendix D for a complete synopsis of Phase II.

Moving Towards PRSSA Certification and CUPRE Recommendations

Specific Course Requirements. Let us review the requirements for PRSSA certification that were presented in Chapter I:

- The college or university offering the PR program must offer baccalaureate degrees and be accredited by a nationally or regionally recognized accrediting association or board.
- The college or university must offer a sequence of five courses in PR, which must be supplemented by courses closely allied to PR. The five courses are:

  1. Principles, Practice, and Theory of PR
  2. PR Techniques: Writing, Message Dissemination, and Media Networking
  3. PR Research for Planning and Evaluation
  4. PR Strategy and Implementation
  5. Supervised PR Experience
The researcher recommends that Carroll begin the process of achieving PRSSA certification for its PR program in this phase. This could be a gradual, step-by-step process. The first step could occur in Phase II, and then step two could be part of Phase III (see p. 72).

Carroll already meets the first requirement for PRSSA certification. However, in order to fulfill the additional conditions, Carroll must add several PR courses to its PR curriculum. The researcher suggests that step one could consist of Carroll introducing two of the five required courses into its PR curriculum.

To complete step one, Carroll could simply divide the already required Introduction to PR course, which comprises material from three separate courses recommended by PRSSA: PR Theory, Introduction to PR Writing, and PR Campaigns. The course could be divided into two consecutive PR courses titled:

- Introduction to PR I: Principles and Theory
- Introduction to PR II: Techniques in Writing, Message Dissemination, and Media Networking

Implementing these two courses would also help meet CUPRE standards, as PRSSA bases its curriculum requirements on CUPRE's 1987 study. Also, CUPRE advises a minimum of 15—and a maximum of 30—credit hours in courses with a PR identification.
Hiring Additional PR Educators. There is currently only one qualified PR educator at Carroll, so there is a natural limit on how many PR courses can be taught. With the goal of establishing additional PR courses, it will be necessary to consider hiring additional PR faculty. The author recognizes three options for Carroll in this endeavor:

- Full-time professor
- Part-time professor
- Adjunct professor

At this point in the five-year plan, the researcher advises hiring an adjunct professor, or maybe two, to teach the two additional PR courses at Carroll. At this time, an adjunct professor would be a gradual, less expensive, and more practical step to increasing PR faculty at Carroll. However, Phase III includes future recommendations regarding PR educators at Carroll (See p. 74).

PR Club. According to the surveyed students, establishing a PR club is important to the overall education of PR graduates. The PR club would be another step towards Carroll achieving the long-term goal of establishing a PRSSA chapter.

Forming a Carroll PR club would require committed parties--such as a few PR students or a PR educator--to organize interested students. The club would need to get senate approval, and then could elect officers, receive
funding from the Associated Students of Carroll College, set up bylaws, and hold regular meetings.

The club could host a variety of activities on campus, such as guest lecturers or forums. Also, the surveyed students thought it would be beneficial for them to do PR work for community organizations and events, as well as work for Carroll campus groups, clubs, activities, and events. The PR Club could facilitate this type of work.

With time and effort, the PR Club would be a step towards establishing a full-scale PRSSA chapter, the requirements of which are described in Phase III. In the meantime, however, it would meet the needs of PR students and be a service to the community.

Practitioner and PR Alumni Roles in Carroll’s PR Program

The research presented in Chapter I advocates the inclusion of PR practitioners in the educational process. Further, several of the students commented that they feel feedback from recent graduates of Carroll’s PR program would be beneficial. The next two sections are the author’s recommendations as to how to address the issue of including practitioners and alumni. However, the author believes that the establishment of a strong PR club is a prerequisite for these suggestions.
Practitioner. Experts (VanLeuven, 1989 and Grunig, 1989) assert that professional PR practitioners can offer valuable insight to PR students. Therefore, students benefit when their schools include local PR practitioners in its PR educational process. These same experts imply that most practitioners are willing to integrate themselves into their local college’s or university’s PR program. Thus, the author recommends that Carroll use local Helena PR practitioners in its PR program. Also, Helena practitioners could provide a link with practitioners from other geographical areas.

The use of Helena practitioners could provide Carroll PR students with real-world PR knowledge. Additionally, students could make contacts for future internships or careers. Schools request numerous kinds of services from practitioners, such as providing financial assistance, giving guest lectures, leading special projects, or even participating on an advisory board for the school’s PR program. Practitioners could also be called upon to offer work exchanges for PR educators, where an educator—or an entire class—performs PR tasks for the company in exchange for experience or money.

Students and experts agree that a program like this would not be extremely difficult to organize, especially if Carroll’s PR club becomes a well-established part of the community. If the officers of the club coordinated their
efforts, the above assistance programs could be implemented with enormous benefit to Carroll's students.

Alumni. Students believe feedback from graduates could also be helpful to them. Such contact could assist students in planning their PR careers in a competitive job market. One possibility would be to invite PR alumni, who often visit Carroll during times like Homecoming or Graduation, to speak to a group of interested PR students. It would merely require effort and organization on the part of PR-club officers.
Phase III: Long-Term Changes

If Phases I and II of this proposal were adopted, Carroll's PR program would be moving towards a greater PR emphasis. The author's suggestions, based on research from Chapters I and II, would produce:

- the development of a clearly written mission statement to follow in decision making
- the improvement of the PR curriculum by elimination of ineffective or duplicate courses and substituting new, more applicable subjects for PR students
- the addition of two of the five PRSSA required sequence of PR courses that will eventually lead to PRSSA certification
- the hiring of at least one adjunct professor to begin teaching two introductory PR courses
- the establishment of a strong PR club
- the increased use of practitioners and graduates in the PR program.

Such changes would bring Carroll closer to meeting the recommendations of PRSSA and CUPRE, as well as enacting the advice of the students and various PR educators, scholars, and practitioners. With those recommendations in place, Carroll could move on to Phase III of this proposal. Phase III consists of long-term goals that could be realized by the Fall semester of the year 2000:

- to achieve PRSSA certification for Carroll's PR program
- to formulate a PRSSA chapter out of Carroll's PR Club
- to hire one full-time PR professor, who is solely dedicated to PR at Carroll
- to implement one of two suggestions: either a required, PR-related minor for every major, or four PR-related concentration sequences, at least one of which must be pursued by every PR major to graduate.
The author first discusses step two of Carroll's plan to achieve full PRSSA certification, which includes introducing three additional PR courses into Carroll's PR curriculum to achieve certification. Then, specific requirements for Carroll's PR club to be able to transform itself into a PRSSA chapter are presented. Following this, the author presents the justification for hiring one, full-time PR professor. Finally, the author addresses expert and student suggestions to require either a PR-related minor or a concentration sequence.

Please refer to Appendix E for a complete synopsis of Phase III.

**Achieving PRSSA Certification**

In Phase II, the author illustrated step one of this plan, where Carroll would split its current Introduction to PR course into two separate courses, one semester of PR theory and one of PR techniques. Carroll's PR program would thus cover the first two course requirements for PRSSA certification. In step two, Carroll could introduce three additional courses into its PR curriculum to achieve full PRSSA certification:

1) PR Research--planning and evaluating
2) PR Strategy and Implementation--campaigns and case studies
3) PR Seminar--Senior-level PR experience
   (Carroll already offers an internship, so the PR seminar is not mandatory for certification. However, experts and students suggest a senior-level PR seminar class.)
By adding the above three courses, Carroll's PR curriculum would have the sequence of five PR courses required for PRSSA certification. Also, at this point, Communication Seminar could be dropped (or possibly revised) from the PR-major requirements. Not only did Communication Seminar receive a low composite score in the student survey (270), but also 23% of students felt it was not relevant to the PR major, and a senior-level PR experience would be more beneficial.

Establishment of a PRSSA Chapter

In order to establish a PRSSA chapter, the PR club would have to be redesigned to meet certain requirements. The PR club could apply for a PRSSA chapter when it is able to meet the following standards:

- the club must involve at least 10 students
- the club must have at least one student who has completed at least one PR course—the others must affirm in writing their intention to enroll in one PR course
- the club must have eight members at or below junior level
- the club must elect a faculty adviser, who must be a full-time teacher of one PR course, and he or she must be a member of PRSA
- the club must elect a professional adviser, who must be an accredited member of PRSA
- the club must have its application endorsed by the president and four members of the sponsoring PRSA club.
Hiring a Full-time PR Professor

In order to achieve the goal of becoming PRSSA certified by the fall semester of the year 2000, Carroll would have to hire one additional, full-time faculty member who would teach some (or all) of the above three PR courses. Students in the survey felt this would be a good option for Carroll.

This new professor should be someone with an extensive background in PR, both professionally and in academic theory. Further, the new professor would ideally be someone who is PRSA accredited. Several experts believe that having a professor who is PRSA accredited would be beneficial to the students (Patruno, 1992). As explained in Chapter I, such professors are traditionally more knowledgeable of current PR practices and have real-world connections to relay to both the students and the school.

Requiring a Minor or a Concentration Sequence

Based on the research of Chapter I and the responses to the student survey in Chapter II, the author presents two related, but differing, routes to the extension of the PR curriculum at Carroll. PR scholars and practitioners assert that PR students should be required to pursue a minor that is complementary to their PR training, such as business administration, speech communication theory, art, or English writing. Students offer another strategy, however,
suggesting the idea of a concentration sequence for PR majors, similar to that of Carroll's business department.

Minor. As discussed in Chapter I, experts (CUPRE, 1987) advise requiring PR majors to pursue a certain, PR-applicable minor. The minor that is most highly recommended is business, but others, such as marketing, journalism, advertising, writing, and art/graphics, are also suggested.

The author recommends that Carroll require PR majors to pursue at least one of the following minors:

- Business Administration
- Speech-Communication Theory
- Art-General
- English Writing
- Journalism (planning is in process)

One reason for suggesting these particular minors is that each of them, with the exception of journalism—which is currently being planned—is already offered as a minor at Carroll. However, the main reasons for choosing these four minors are: 1) Experts, as discussed in Chapter I, believe these particular minors would be especially helpful to PR students. 2) These skills are among the most wanted by PR practitioners when hiring graduates.

Concentration Sequence. The students who participated in the follow-up session of the survey presented in Chapter II discussed the possibility of creating a PR program similar to the current business program at Carroll. This
style of PR program would entail a core set of PR courses that every PR major would be required to take.

Additionally, however, each student would be required to choose at least one area of concentration out of three or four that would be offered, such as journalism, advertising, mass media, or art/graphics/desktop publishing. The students felt this would be a good idea for Carroll’s PR program in the future, but agreed that it would not be feasible for quite some time.

Several courses would have to be constructed to handle such a program, since Carroll currently has no advertising courses, and only one journalism class and one mass-media class. While a concentration program would take much effort and time in planning, students believed it would be beneficial to their training. However, requiring a PR-related minor would also be effective. Educators will have to decide which of the two options—either requiring a minor or an area of concentration—is the best course for Carroll’s PR program to pursue.
CONCLUSION

In the last three chapters, the author has presented information regarding PR education. Chapter I included a comprehensive review of research regarding PR education as explained by several PR practitioners, educators, and scholars. Chapter II is a complete analysis of Carroll College's PR program, and Chapter III is a five-year, three-phase plan for the transformation and redesigning of that program.

As stated initially, the author intends a very practical purpose for this thesis, which is to offer her research to those who have the authority to redesign Carroll's PR program. The final proposals are grounded in research, and while they will take a certain amount of time and effort, they are, logistically, relatively simple to implement.

Through my work, I have documented a need for further research into the development of Carroll's PR program. For instance, the students believe that a concentration sequence for the PR major is possible; however, much more research and planning must be done for that to occur. Also, it would be possible, eventually, for the Carroll PR program to break away from the Communication Studies Department and be an independent department. However, this also would take further research and planning.

Other future research might include examining the PR
minor and incorporating it into the reconstructed PR program. Additionally, the author is aware of the high number of credit hours (84) proposed in phase III of the proposal. While the author feels each course recommended in that phase is important, further narrowing down of the PR major credit hours may be desirable.

In other words, this thesis is only a beginning. The author's hope is that Carroll's PR educators, along with the Curriculum Committee, will use this research as a backbone for decision making about the organization of Carroll's PR program, so it is able to meet the needs of 21st century PR students, educators, and practitioners.
APPENDIX A

Responses to the Six Open-Ended Questions in the Survey

Author's Note: The author bracketed--[ ]--certain words to correct grammatical errors. Punctuation was added in some places to increase readability. Aside from that, quotes were taken "as is" from the surveys--abbreviations as well.

Which of the above classes would you delete from the current requirements in PR? Why?

- "Computer Applications in Business, Design, Expository Writing. Do not have a lot to do with the major. Or if they do it is not apparent to me."
- "Introduction to Public Administration. The course examines governmental policies and functions, which I didn't find particularly relevant to my course of study or future profession."
- "Design--a class in desktop publishing would be more applicable. Also, a basic course in computers that is Macintosh based would be more helpful to prepare for desktop publishing than the current IBM-based intro. class."
- "Comm. Sem., Expository Writing, Design--not related."
- "Comm. Seminar--I can't see how this applies to PR in a practical sense. Computer applications in Business. Mass Media should either be deleted or changed."
- "Design. Desktop publishing would be more valuable."
- "Design--I learned almost nothing."
- "Marketing--this would be good if there were projects or something (I took it during Summer Session)."
- "The class I would delete would be Design; I have taken the class and see no relevance in taking it and applying it to PR."
- "Design/Photography--good for inducing creativity, but not directly applicable, maybe computer graphics or layout/design class in its place. Expository Writing--not applicable--maybe switch w/Technical Writing."
- "Social Psychology--everything in S.P. is duplicated in Interpersonal Comm. (IPC) and Small Group Comm."
- "Comm. Sem."
"I think they all play an important role. If [I] had to I would say Expository Writing. I never understood where that would be helpful in PR."

Which of the classes do you consider repetitive of other classes? (Meaning you studied the same "stuff" in each.)

- "Social Psychology is a lot of cross-over with IPC. Fundamentals of Management and Human Resource Management (HRM) contain much of the same material, but each had some uniquely important information."
- "A lot of courses have some overlap--Organizational Comm./Management/HRM/Public Administration, but they all have a slightly different focus. So, I don't know!"
- "Computer Applications in Business had a lot of computer info. from Intro. to Computer (at least in Darryl Hagen's class)."
- "Computer Basic, Apps. in Business."
- "None on this list."
- "None."
- "HRM and Management are repetitive classes."
- "Social Psych.--repeat of IPC, General Psych. and Small Group. Maybe just require General and not Social as it is covered in other classes."
- "Social Psychology--see above."
- "Business Management, Public Admin., HRM."
- "The psychology classes. Social Psych. seems to repeat a lot of General Psych."

Given the above classes, do you feel you have been adequately prepared to obtain a career in PR? Why or why not?

- "No. I learned a lot of theory, but very little practical application. I did not learn what possibilities exist for employment with a PR degree."
- "I feel I could be better prepared had I been more exposed to "hands on" PR work. Writing for the Media and Intro. to PR were most valuable to me, and they contained such areas of learning."
- "It's hard to say without being "out there," but a big chunk that's missing is Desktop Publishing."
PR people often need those skills to make brochures, etc. Otherwise, it seems like a pretty inclusive curriculum."

- "No. I can't even define PR. I do believe I got a well-rounded education, though, but it's highly lacking in PR work. Not have much to do with PR."

- "Yes and no. We've had a lot of theory. I feel as if I need more practical stuff."

- "Maybe. I am not sure I know what PR is having only one class actually in PR."

- "No. These classes are mostly theory. No hands-on training."

- "Yes, because I took Intro. to PR, of course."

- "Yes, I feel the education I received was very well-rounded and covered many different and important aspects of PR."

- "I feel that C.C. has prepared me, but I think it was more because of my direct work experience in the PR dept. and working on the student publications--hands-on experience is the best!"

- "Probably not applicable to me since I never intended to work in the field. The communications and writing classes have been most helpful to me on my present job. In a sense, I'm already working in a related field."

- "Yes. I feel well rounded in all aspects of academe."

- "In some ways yes, but we need more actual PR work. Intro. to PR wasn't enough; however, it was a good class. We are getting classes in every area, but there are other classes that we could use more experience in."

How can C.C. PR department better prepare its students for a career in PR?

- "Offer more strictly PR classes. Have the PR department more aware of what other classes in other departments are teaching."

- "By providing students with more hands-on learning. Working on actual PR projects, study of T.V. and radio media at work. Exposure to mass media equipment and mass media technology."

- "Promote more PR internships. I often hear of opportunities that are called in to Harry or Brent that get no feedback. We need more "on the ground" preparation. Someone at Carroll should follow up on these opportunities."

- "More PR classes (technique, theory, writing) all separate. PR seminar, not Comm. Sem--it has nothing to do with PR. Bring in adjunct profs. to
teach PR courses—teachers here focus on communication. PR is very ignored here. Have in certain classes, but not learn real PR."

• "Computer Class (Hagen’s) need more hands-on experience or maybe we need a more advanced class. More practical and usable stuff. More writing for the media so we could look at other types of writing, ie. opinions, etc., columns, etc."

• "Stress internships. With the nature of the major being so broad I think students need to explore their individual interests in the career."

• "More actual PR work—perhaps in the community."

• "I feel that by making internships directly related to PR work would be very beneficial."

• "More hands on experience like in Intro. to PR—I think Intro. could be more basic and have another experience based PR class at the senior level—other than the Comm.-based Senior Sem."

• "I’m not sure that PR as a field is ever discussed—at least it hasn’t been a topic in any of my classes so far. If I hadn’t interviewed a PR person during Basic Comm., I would have no idea what a career in PR means."

• "Explain what you can do in PR."

• "As I said in above—give more hands on experience. Maybe jobs we could do for the public for practice—even things for C.C. (projects). Also, if could get the PR club back in action, maybe a good idea."

• "Hands on training in some classes."

What do you feel is missing from the current PR curriculum at Carroll?

• "Desktop publishing. Definitely needs more classes that are strictly PR."

• "Knowledge of mass media and its technology. Ethics of PR professionals. I’m not completely sure what is missing, I guess I’ll know when I’m out there working in PR!"

• "A focus on how you actually find those PR jobs—what do real PR job descriptions look like? Feedback from recent grads would be great."

• "Stats class, hands-on experience, more internships."

• "Desktop publishing should be required. Stats. PR club would help people see what PR is really about. Perhaps something involving International Relations and more experience with speaking (not just summarizing chapters from a book)."

• "Advanced writing for the media, journalism"
influence or area of concentration."
  • "See question above."
  • "I would like to see a more advanced class on PR—taking Intro. information and expanding."
  • "Senior-level PR applications class, computer graphics/applications class, stronger curriculum dealing with different types of media (writing copy for PSA's as well as press releases."
  • "I think more public speaking experience would be helpful. Also, some kind of PR orientation."
  • "Preparation or scope of the field of PR within professional field."
  • "Hands-on work...I don't really feel I know enough to go out and get a job in PR somewhere."
  • One no answer.

Why did you choose to study PR at Carroll?

  • "Because it can be used for a variety of different occupations. Also because of the variety of different classes offered."
  • "Professor Brent Northup spoke to me after I completed his Basic Comm. course. I liked the variety of courses in the curriculum and felt it would give me a broad base, a truly liberal-arts education."
  • "I was in public information for 4 years before coming to Carroll. I wanted to move up in that field and felt I needed a degree. I liked the PR course selection—they were mostly things I would have taken anyway in any degree program."
  • "Because of an influence in high school. Didn't know much about PR at C.C.; wouldn't have chosen PR at C.C. if I understood more about it."
  • "Because I liked the classes that were required. They were very broad range, which I felt would be adaptable to many types of jobs, not only PR."
  • "I liked the variety of classes required for the major, but I am still not sure what I am qualified to do."
  • "The topic has always interested me."
  • "PR was my original major; I chose it because I liked the classes that were required. I changed after I took Intro. to PR because I found out that's not what I want to do."
  • "I chose PR because having a PR major/minor complements nicely with a Comm. degree and is easy to obtain when doing Comm."
  • "Changed major from Math/Computer Science—took a few Comm./PR classes became interested and switched."
• "Older student, Helena resident, no other college accessible. Picked PR because of the course variety--liked the many different topics available in the major."
• "It sounded and looked broad and I did not have a specific field in mind."
• "I think it's interesting and can create good job opportunities."
Current Requirements for Carroll College's PR Program
1992-1994 Course Catalog
(72 total credit hours)

- Basic Communication
- Small Group Communication
- Introduction to PR
- Communication Ethics
- Communication Technology and Strategy of Mass Media
- Organizational Communication
- Interpersonal Communication
- Persuasion/Conflict Management
- Career Internship
- Communication Seminar
- Photography I
- Design
- Marketing
- Fundamentals of Management
- Human Resource Management
- A Survey of Computer Science
- Computer Applications in Business
- Business Writing
- Writing for the Media
- Expository Writing
- Introduction to Public Administration
- Public Administration and Politics
- General Psychology
- Social Psychology
APPENDIX C

Synopsis of Phase I

Major Program Requirements (72 total credit hours)

* Career Internship (2)
* Pagemaker
* Introduction to Business
* Survey of Economics
* Elementary Statistics
* Technical Writing
  Basic Communication
  Small Group Communication
  Introduction to PR
  Communication Ethics
  Communication Technology and Strategy of Mass Media
  Organizational Communication
  Interpersonal Communication
  Persuasion/Conflict Management
  Communication Seminar
  Photography I
  Marketing
  Fundamentals of Management
  A Survey of Computer Science
  Business Writing
  Writing for the Media
  Introduction to Public Administration
  General Psychology

* New Courses


Additional Suggestions

- Determine where Carroll’s program should fall on the continuum of pre-professional training versus theoretical training.
- Compose a mission statement for the PR program, from which future decisions could be made.
- Maintain the PR program under the umbrella of the Communication Studies department.
- Preserve the liberal-arts emphasis in the PR program along side a new, PR emphasis.
APPENDIX D

Synopsis of Phase II

Major Program Requirements (78 total credit hours)

* Introduction to PR I: Principles and Theory
* Introduction to PR II: Techniques in Writing, Message Dissemination, and Media Networking
Basic Communication
Small Group Communication
Communication Ethics
Communication Technology and Strategy of Mass Media
Organizational Communication
Interpersonal Communication
Persuasion/Conflict Management
Career Internship (2)
Communication Seminar
Photography I
Pagemaker
Introduction to Business Marketing
Fundamentals of Management
Survey of Economics
Elementary Statistics
A Survey of Computer Science
Business Writing
Writing for the Media
Technical Writing
Introduction to Public Administration
General Psychology

* New Courses

Additional Suggestions

- Make curriculum changes which move toward PRSSA certification--step one.
- Hire additional PR faculty--adjunct professor to teach new courses.
- Establish a PR club, reaching towards the longer-term goal of becoming a PRSSA chapter.
- Increase PR practitioner and PR alumni involvement in Carroll’s PR program.
APPENDIX E

Synopsis of Phase III

Major Program Requirements (84 total credit hours)

* PR Research
* PR Strategy and Implementation
* PR Seminar
  Introduction to PR I: Principles and Theory
  Introduction to PR II: Techniques in Writing, Message Dissemination, and Media Networking
  Basic Communication
  Small Group Communication
  Communication Ethics
  Communication Technology and Strategy of Mass Media
  Organizational Communication
  Interpersonal Communication
  Persuasion/Conflict Management
  Career Internship (2)
  Photography I
  Pagemaker
  Introduction to Business Marketing
  Fundamentals of Management
  Survey of Economics
  Elementary Statistics
  A Survey of Computer Science
  Business Writing
  Writing for the Media
  Technical Writing
  Introduction to Public Administration
  General Psychology

* New Courses

Deleted Courses: Communication Seminar

Additional Suggestions

  • Achieve full PRSSA certification through implementation of step 2—adding three additional PR courses.
  • Transform PR Club to PRSSA chapter.
  • Hire a full-time PR professor.
  • Require PR students to pursue either a minor in business administration, English writing, speech communication theory, or art; or establish a concentration sequence.
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