

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A NEW PROGRAM AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY:
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE PROGRAM IN PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University to establish a new Bachelor of Science Program in Public Relations in the Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Executive Summary: The proposed program will be a standalone program which will offer new opportunities for students to gain the knowledge and skills needed by public relations professionals. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

◇ **Description of program.** A public relations program focuses on the theories and methods for building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its stakeholders, constituencies, audiences, and the general public. It prepares individuals to function as public relations managers and technicians working for corporations, government, and not-for-profit organizations. Key topics of instruction are public relations theory; public relations writing; research methods; public relations campaign; message/image design; image management; media relations; community relations; public affairs; and internal communications.

The proposed program will follow the recommendations of the Commission on Public Relation Education whose focus is ethical practice and leadership in communication. “New generation professionals should follow honest practices to build a fundamental trust between publics and organizations. This transparency requires ethical decision-making and an increasingly influential role at the table where decisions are made.”¹

The proposed program will include the following objectives:

- ⇒ Perform tasks and critical thinking skills required of public relations professionals in an environment of ethical practice and transparent communication;
- ⇒ Demonstrate, in classroom and professional settings, proficiency in persuasive skills through a variety of media (written, spoken, events, electronic, visual);
- ⇒ Define the role of the media in a free and complex global society; and
- ⇒ Investigate and apply communication theory.

¹ *The Professional Bond* (2006).

- ◇ Assessment of objectives. Instructors will assess student learning using such methods as portfolio reviews, assignments, examinations, and presentations to faculty, clients, and visiting professionals. Practitioners will also assess student preparedness through the internship program. Twice during the 400-hour professional internship program, employers will be asked to evaluate students in several areas of professional practice, including communication skills, ethical and legal practice, and general employability.
- ◇ Need for proposed program. Currently, the Bachelor of Science Program in Journalism and Mass Communication offers its students an opportunity to enroll in a public relations emphasis area or take public relations courses. The proposed program will be developed as a standalone program which will allow students to specialize in the field of public relations. A standalone program in public relations will accurately communicate the students' program of study and will remove the limitations on employment and other opportunities imposed by the standard journalism degree.
- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at ISU. The department has indicated that the proposed program will be unique and will not overlap or conflict with existing programs at the university. Students majoring in marketing, design, agriculture, apparel merchandising, communication studies, event management, and political science frequently enroll in public relations courses. The proposed program will provide more options to students in other programs by (1) taking public relations courses to complement their programs of study; (2) pursuing a minor in public relations; or (3) pursuing double majors.
- ◇ Duplication. The University of Iowa does not offer a public relations undergraduate program. The University of Northern Iowa offers a public relations undergraduate program that includes coursework in journalism, communication studies, and business. ISU's proposed program differs from UNI's program in the following ways: (1) the proposed program places emphasis on the public information requirements of non-profit and for-profit agencies and organizations engaged in agriculture, natural resources, engineering and energy industries, biotechnology, biorenewable resources and the bioeconomy, and food safety and food security; (2) the Journalism and Mass Communication program is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication; (3) the Greenlee School requires 400 hours of on-the-job training to complete three credits of internship; and (4) the proposed program strengthens the synergy between advertising and public relations which provides the integrated communication requirements of today's workforce.

A public relations concentration is also available at Ashford University, Loras College, Coe College, Dordt College, Drake University, Grand View University, Mount Mercy University, Morningside College, Northwestern College, St. Ambrose University, Waldorf College, Wartburg College, Upper Iowa University, and William Penn University. They are not standalone programs in public relations. For instance, Wartburg College offers an undergraduate degree in Communication Arts with a concentration in public relations. None of these programs has received programmatic accreditation.
- ◇ Program accreditation. The proposed program will seek accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. The next scheduled review of the Greenlee School is 2016.

- ◇ Student demand. According to the Greenlee School, an average of 76 students undertook a public relations internship on an annual basis during the past six years. Since 1996, an average of 140 students has enrolled in public relations core courses on an annual basis. Without a standalone program in public relations, students with an interest in public relations have received a degree in journalism. However, the journalism degree does not reflect the position requirements of the job market. It does not accurately represent the students' enrollment in public relations courses or their 400-hour internship experience.
- ◇ Unique features. The proposed program will include a combination of required general education courses to ensure that graduates have a strong liberal arts background required of tomorrow's leaders. The Greenlee School offers one of the most rigorous internship programs in the country. More than a co-op or job shadow, the internship experience places students on the job sufficiently long to become a part of the organizational culture and practice their skills. An intensive assessment program is also built into the internship experience.

A research project funded by the Public Relations Society of America, "A First Look: An In-Depth Analysis of Global Public Relations Education" (2010) indicated that the most highly valued courses in an undergraduate program are public relations theory; public relations strategies; communication models, strategies, and theories; communication techniques; public relations practice and deontology/ethics; professional activities; and research methods.

These courses are currently offered by the Greenlee School which underscores the fact that ISU offers a public relations specialization. The report highlighted the importance of "a social science frame for a management worldview about teaching public relations." Greenlee School graduates are well positioned to meet new global challenges because journalism and mass communication is a social science field.

- ◇ Resources. The Greenlee School has 29 faculty members – five are tenured professors; six are tenured associate professors; five are assistant professors; eight are lecturers; two are senior lecturers; one is a senior clinician; and one is a clinician. Eight faculty members regularly teach public relations and related courses. Two actively publish peer-reviewed refereed scholarly works in public relations journals and other venues. Two academic advisors and an internship coordinator help students select courses that meet degree requirements.

The School has facilities and equipment to maintain high teaching standards for the proposed program. Private industry partners funded an integrated media suite that includes 10 computers with the latest software, two editing/audio bays, and an equipment office. Hamilton Hall has two focus group rooms and a physiometric testing laboratory with the ability to measure brain wave reactions, heart rate, and galvanic skin responses to communication stimuli. The broadcast studios provide hands-on experience for public relations students to learn about news production and journalistic standards.

- ◇ Cost. The financial resources are already committed by the College/School for the existing course offerings; funding for the standalone program will not change. Implementing the proposed program will require no new costs. The existing annual budget that will support the standalone program is \$284,149 for Year 1. This includes eight faculty teaching lines, internship and advising support, computer and office support, and supplies. New costs for Years 2-7 will average \$7,300 per year; therefore, the projected annual budget for Year 7 is \$327,977.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. The projected enrollment is a minimum of 76 students in Year 1, increasing to a minimum of 86 students by Year 7. The School also anticipates a minimum of 100 non-majors who will enroll in public relations courses. The anticipated sources of students will include currently enrolled Journalism students who want to specialize in public relations as well as entering high school graduates. The School anticipates the following marketing efforts – the School’s annual Futures Forum; the local chapter of the Public Relations Students Society of America; professional organizations in the communication industry; the School’s activities in celebration of the First Amendment Week; the School’s media venues.
- ◇ Workforce Need/Demand. According to the Department of Iowa Workforce Development (2012), employment growth for public relations specialists in Iowa is expected to increase by 21% between 2008 (2,217 jobs) and 2018 (2,676 jobs). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), job growth for public relations managers and specialists is expected to increase by 21% (more than 68,000 jobs) between 2010 and 2020. The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics reports that 4,475 students received a bachelor’s degree in public relations in 2008-2009. The supply of trained professionals is not adequate to meet the growing demand.

In 2011, the International Communications Consultancy Organization found that in the U.S., public relations firms saw an 11% increase in fee revenue in the midst of a worldwide recession in 2010. In 2012, the Worldcom Public Relations Group, which surveyed more than 100 firms in Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America, and South America, found that more than 75% of firms had recently hired new staff to support new business or intended to hire in the first quarter of 2012. The Council of Public Relations Firms (2012) reported that 60% of their participating firms increased employee headcounts in 2011.

The 2011 International Communication Consultancy Organization’s World Consultancy Report indicated that staffing remains top five challenge as public relations spending continues to grow. *U.S. News and World Report* listed public relations as one of the “50 best careers of 2011.” According to *Money* magazine and PayScale.com (2012), public relations is a “Top 100” job.

- ◇ Collaboration with UNI. A standalone public relations undergraduate program at ISU will enable the Greenlee School to explore collaborative initiatives with UNI: (1) offer joint courses online; (2) implement cross-campus enrollment to provide students with access to faculty and curriculum specializations; (3) undertake joint grant writing and research projects; (4) establish a faculty exchange and guest lecture series; and (5) exchange internship opportunities. These inter-institutional collaborative efforts will be discussed with the chair and public relations faculty of the Department of Communication Studies at UNI.

- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. The proposed program will address the University's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan mission – knowledge generation and knowledge sharing.

To create knowledge, ISU must be a “magnet for attracting outstanding students...who will learn, work, and conduct scholarship that addresses the challenges of the 21st century.” Toward this objective, the University intends to “recruit, support, retain, and graduate a diverse group of outstanding undergraduate...and professional students dedicated to making a difference in the world.” As a unit that offers “destination majors,” the Greenlee School has a reputation for attracting students who are committed to enhancing their education with research and experiential learning. The School's public relations faculty includes active researchers and teachers who share their research efforts with students and invite them to engage with learning materials at a high level.

To share knowledge, ISU must communicate with and learn from diverse populations. The University intends to “maintain a strong focus on student success and provide exceptional undergraduate...and outreach programs that prepare students and citizens for leadership and success.” The Greenlee School provides a strong internship program. Students are required to complete a 400-hour internship that allows them to share and enhance their education with working professionals. Many students complete multiple internships as a way of sharing and learning.

The College's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan states that a primary mission is to “provide liberal arts education that will help prepare students to live and work in a constantly evolving world.” To do so, the College will “continue to invest in and build high-quality undergraduate programs in those fields that are destination majors or where student interest is strong – currently biology, communication, and journalism...” The College acknowledges that it “must target investments in undergraduate courses and majors that are in greatest need and demand.” As a “destination major,” the proposed program meets the rising demand for well-educated professional in the field.

The Greenlee School aims to prepare students to be “professionals and scholars in culturally diverse communication environment...global citizens who are culturally informed, technologically adept, and ready to lead.” Its graduates are expected to “perform active roles in the examination of communication issues and opportunities for the benefit of the state, nation, and international communities.” The proposed program will contribute to these objectives by training students who will provide professional leadership as well as research and strategic planning skills to guide and enhance organizational, local, national, and international communication efforts. The Greenlee School professional advisory board provides feedback that helps the curriculum to stay current with today's communication environment.

- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed program will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the next General Catalog of the university. New students will be admitted for the entering class of Fall 2013.