

January 2016

Dear Public Relations Colleagues:

I am writing in this open forum to express my appreciation for the opportunity to have chaired the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) in 2015 and to highlight just some of the board's accomplishments in the past year. I'm pleased to continue my service this year on the board as a Public Relations Society of America representative. As many of you know, eight participating organizations work through the UAB to advance Accreditation, and I was honored to represent the Southern Public Relations Federation from 2008–2012.

The UAB works to unify and advance the public relations profession through the leadership and administration of the Accreditation in Public Relations programs, including APR, APR+M, and the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations. We develop and implement policies, coordinate and maintain examinations, review appeal cases, promote the programs and grant Accreditation.

I am always amazed to see the volume of work accomplished over a weekend several times a year by the board; and the strides we make at other times via email and conference calls are fulfilling as well. This is one of the hardest working and most caring groups I have ever worked with in any setting.

I first became interested in Accreditation about 25 years ago when many colleagues in SPRF and PRSA encouraged me strongly to pursue the credential. (Many might call it hounding or pestering, which I have now been accused of often as well!) As a former public relations director and an assistant professor at the time, I saw the advantage of enhancing my credibility and hopefully that of our department and university with practitioners. Honestly, it's one of the best professional decisions I've ever made, and I encourage anyone working in public relations for the recommended five years to pursue the APR.

Elizabeth McMillan, APR, is the 2016 chair of the UAB and will continue her great work in this new leadership role. I look forward to her expanding the reach of the UAB and communicating the benefits of APR. She also would like to connect with more professionals and gain their insights on ways to enhance the APR in the coming year and beyond.

I also would like to recognize and thank Bey-Ling Sha, Ph.D., APR, who served as the 2014 UAB chair. She continues to be a great mentor to me and many others. In addition, our PRSA staff colleagues who work extensively on the APR programs are incredible. The board members rotate on and off the board, but Kathy Mulvihill, Jeneen Garcia, and Judy Voss, APR, provide advice and consistency over the years.

Below we are providing highlights of just some of the milestones reached in 2015 based on UAB work groups. I've listed the chairs of these groups with their areas and asked for their input. Many of these accomplishments overlap since groups work so closely together. Thank you again for the opportunity to serve!



John Forde, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA
2015 Universal Accreditation Board Chair

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Agricultural Relations Council

Asociación de Relacionistas
Profesionales de Puerto Rico

Florida Public Relations Association

Maine Public Relations Council

National School Public Relations
Association

Public Relations Society of America

Religion Communicators Council

Southern Public Relations Federation

Work Groups With 2015 Chairs

Examination – Kathleen Giery, APR, CPRC

The Examination Work Group facilitated the successful launch of an updated computer-based Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations. Starting with the implementation of revised knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) in January 2015, the work group then recruited candidates to participate in the practice analysis survey, which assessed the importance, relevance and frequency of the new KSAs; updated, reviewed and double-referenced nearly 200 questions in the spring and fall; recruited more than 100 candidates to sit for the beta Examination during the summer; and wrapped up the year by publishing a new iteration of the Examination, which will debut in January 2016. We also led a panel discussion/presentation at the PRSA 2016 International Conference in October and issued new FAQs on the updated computer-based Examination in December.

Preparation – Douglas Cannon, Ph.D., APR+M, Fellow PRSA

The Preparation Work Group completed two major tasks during 2015 and started a third. Working with the Examination Work Group, we identified at least two references from the Short Bookshelf for each item on the computer-based Examination. Spurred on by former UAB Chair Susan Barnes, we revised and published the second edition of the “Study Guide for the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations Examination.” To support the adjusted weighting of the Examination KSAs, we began revising the “Study Guide for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations.” The third edition will be published in early 2016.

Research – Kaye Sweetser, Ph.D., APR+M

The overall purpose of the Research Work Group is to help the board and others understand perceptions of the APR and related areas. We conducted a practice analysis survey of 691 public relations practitioners (not just APRs). The practice analysis assists the UAB in verifying the blueprint for the APR. We also analyzed data in conjunction with the beta testing for the format and process for the computer-based Examination. In addition, we surveyed campus coordinators to best understand the promotion and localized processes for encouraging and offering the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations. As with every year, the work group also conducted surveys of candidates who had just completed the Readiness Review, computer-based Examination, and the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations Examination.

Marketing Communications – Judy Katzel, APR and Philip Poole, APR

The Marketing Communications Work Group translates, packages and disseminates news on the work of the UAB to key audiences within and related to the profession of public relations. In the past year, we wrote and distributed news releases on numbers of candidates sitting for the computer-based Examination (CBE), passing the CBE, and being Advanced through the Readiness Review, along with releases on the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations process. We also promoted the revised KSAs and the updating process for the CBE. In addition, this group reports results from various research projects among current APRs regarding their experiences with the Examination and the overall process,

as well as develops and posts “Tips and Tools” on the UAB website to support the work of APR chairs at the local level. In the past year, we also managed an overhaul of the current UAB website, including updating content, navigation and graphic design. Current work includes developing a nationwide campaign in conjunction with a consulting firm to promote the APR, APR+M, and Certificate in Principles of Public Relations programs to increase the number of participants as well as increase awareness and understanding of the true value of these certification programs among both current and future APRs.

APR+M – Mitchell Marovitz, Ph.D., APR

The APR+M Work Group reported an increased number of applications approved by 44 percent (from nine to 16); and the number of credential holders also grew by about 12 percent to 49. We also completed the Delphi Study of credential holders that provided insight into the value of the credential. In addition, we briefed the results of the study at the September UAB meeting; developed communications goals, objectives and strategies for the program; and are coordinating with the Marketing Communications Work Group to develop materials designed to increase awareness of the credential among military leaders. Further, we drafted and coordinated a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Defense and the UAB.

Certificate in Principles of Public Relations – Tina McCorkindale, Ph.D., APR

The Certificate in Principles of Public Relations Work Group focused on creating a video course for students preparing to take the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations examination. Currently, students are required to attend an in-person class taught by a faculty member to prepare for the examination. With online video modules presented by experts, this new course will allow more students to complete their preparation. The online modules are scheduled for release in early 2016. The work group also promoted the Certificate program through articles, promotions and speaking opportunities with educators and practitioners.

Eligibility and Appeals, Policies and Procedures – Sherry Harlow, APR

This work group collaborated with all other groups to maintain consistency in policies for the board. New information was added concerning the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations and the revised KSAs. Statements were added on succession planning for the board and potential service of APRs to represent new potential participating organizations. Policies were updated to extend the period for applicants to take the computer-based Examination after advancement from the Readiness Review due to extenuating circumstances. The group also updated participating organization awards programs to qualify for maintenance requirements. Lastly, the group worked to establish two-year renewable terms (with a limit of eight total years served) for all UAB members, effective January 2016.