

Dedicated to the Science Beneath the Art

A 50-Year Report from the Institute for Public Relations™

1956

Chartered as the Foundation
for Public Relations Research
and Education



1959

Fellowship Program brings selected professors
into outstanding public relations departments
or firms; 70 educators and 50 sponsors
participate over two decades

1961

First Annual Distinguished Lecture; leading
scholars and practitioners explore public
relations history and professional issues

Grant supports new *Communication,
Public Opinion and Management* course at
Cornell University Graduate School of
Business & Public Administration

The purposes for which such corporation is formed are:

- To conduct, provide, sponsor and foster research, instruction and study in the general field of public relations;
- To give, grant and sponsor the granting of scholarships, fellowships and other awards for research, instruction and study in the general field of public relations;
- To promote facilities and opportunities for research in and analysis of public relations through forums, discussions, surveys, public meetings, exhibitions and conferences; and
- To furnish and distribute pamphlets, books and monographs, and in general to disseminate information concerning the subject of public relations.

From our original charter, October 26, 1956

The Institute for Public Relations is an independent nonprofit organization that builds and documents research-based knowledge in public relations, and makes this knowledge available and useful to practitioners, educators, researchers and their clients. We were chartered in 1956 as the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education. This report reviews the highlights of our 50-year dedication to the *science beneath the art of public relations.*[™]

Fifty Years of Leadership

More than 200 top public relations professionals and educators have served on the Board of Trustees of the Foundation/Institute since its founding in 1956. The distinguished roster has included the leaders listed here, and scores of others equally notable.

PRESIDENT/CHAIR

Pendleton Dudley, 1956-60
Milton Fairman, 1961-65
Glen Perry, 1966-67
Scott Jones, 1968-70
William Cook, 1971-72
Allen H. Center, 1973-74
Ralph Frede, 1975-77
William Shain, 1978
Dorothy Gregg, 1979-80
William W. Marsh, 1981
E.N. Brandt, 1982-83
Kerryn King, 1984-85
Frank T. LeBart, 1986-87
Paul H. Alvarez, 1988-89
Stephen J. Kaye, 1990-92
Willard Nielsen, 1993-96
John D. Bergen, 1997-99
W. Ward White, 1999-2005
Frank Ovaatt, 2001-03
Peter D. Debreceny, 2004-present

CEO

James L. Tolley, 1991-95
John W. Felton, 1995-2004
Frank Ovaatt, 2005-present

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/DIRECTOR

Dr. Frederick (Chris) Teahan, 1964-79
Rea W. Smith, 1979-1981
Don Bates, 1981-90
Michelle Hinson, 1995-present

1964

First Foundation-supported bibliography of public relations studies; later editions appear in *Public Relations Review*



1968

Begin audiovisual archives project preserving contemporary professional history through interviews with leading practitioners

1969

First book on *Public Relations Law*



1973

Opinion of the Publics, a documentary film of public relations case histories, is released; ultimately seen by 15 million people

Serving a Young Profession

It was 1956, a mere nine years after the formation of the Public Relations Society of America. Less than 30 years earlier, Arthur W. Page had gone to work for the AT&T Company as the first ever corporate vice president of public relations. A few years before that, Edward L. Bernays published *Crystalizing Public Opinion* and taught the first course in public relations. In fact, it was only 1906 when Ivy Ledbetter Lee left Wall Street reporting to issue his *Declaration of Principles*, heralding the birth of modern public relations counseling.

So the public relations profession was still very young in 1956 when a group of senior practitioners showed remarkable vision by establishing a nonprofit organization singularly focused on building a professional body of knowledge. It was known then as the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, and today as the Institute for Public Relations.

What did our founders see that others around them may not have?

That no occupation attains the status of a profession without a substantial body of codified professional knowledge and educational systems to help create and disseminate that knowledge. This is as true of public relations as it is of medicine, law, accounting or teaching. In each case, there is science underlying the art, and it is the working knowledge of that science combined with creativity that marks the best professionals.

In 1989, the organization became independent of PRSA and adopted a new name, the Institute for Public Relations Research and Education, later shortened to our current name. Since 1995, the organization has been located at the College of Journalism and Communications of the University of Florida.

Today the Institute for Public Relations serves the profession as never before by expanding the frontiers of research-based knowledge and mainstreaming this into public relations practice and education. As an independent organization, we work freely with many universities and public relations associations in the United States and around the world.

Ours is not a membership-based model. The Institute supports its work through program revenues and generous contributions from many of the world's leading public relations agencies, corporations, research companies and educators. That's how we are able to provide all of our research and publications free at www.instituteforpr.org.

1975

Publish *A Design for Public Relations Education*, the first curricular guidelines by the Commission on Public Relations Education

Launch *Public Relations Review*, the first peer-reviewed research journal in the field; produced by a commercial publisher since 1988

1977

Publish *Managing Your Public Relations: Guidelines for Nonprofit Organizations*

With University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, initiate an annual week-long symposium for high-potential public relations leaders

1980

Introduce Best Master's Thesis Award for graduate PR student research; now sponsored by Northwestern Mutual

The Executive Speechmaker provides a structured approach to speech programs

So, 50 Years on, What Have We Learned?

First, that achieving our mission requires a duality of focus: theory and practice. The academic-professional partnership has worked well for other recognized professions and has proven productive for the public relations field as well.

Second, that research can serve to define not only what we know, but also what we don't. The knowledge base of our field is extensive and growing all the time. Priorities for further research need to be driven by academics and professionals thinking together about what new knowledge public relations needs.

Third, that the value of formal public relations education is tightly linked with rigorous curricula addressing the needs of tomorrow's PR technicians, managers and leaders. Traditionally, public relations has been taught in journalism and communications schools. There are occasional classes in business schools, though it's widely agreed there is far too little public relations in business education, and too little business in public relations education.

Practitioners must be engaged in defining curricula as well as the process of accrediting schools that teach public relations. They also must join the fight for more tenure-track positions filled with qualified Ph.D.'s who have significant academic and professional experience, and to recruit promising students into these programs.

Finally, despite the efforts of universities to turn out well-educated graduates in our field, there are too many practitioners who have never mastered the knowledge foundations of the public relations profession. It's not only that the science beneath the art keeps evolving and expanding. The number of people entering public relations also continues to grow rapidly, and the barriers to entry remain low. As the Institute seeks to fill this gap with professional educational programs, our work is never done.

In short, we have learned that professionalism is a bridge.

This bridge must have many lanes where practitioners and academics can reach and support each other – philosophically, intellectually and financially. After 50 years of progress, the Institute for Public Relations – Board, staff, friends and supporters – can certainly be proud of all that has been accomplished.

Proud, but not satisfied.

1981

Community Service Competition launched with National Communication Council for Human Services; students mount public relations campaigns for local charities

1984

Pathfinder Award, funded by practitioner, educator and author Allen H. Center, created to recognize original program of scholarly research



1985

First Golden Writing Awards for public relations students

Advancing Public Relations: Recommended Curriculum for Graduate Public Relations Education, published with Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)

Begin annual breakfast at AEJMC to foster closer relations with key educators

1986

Publish first book on *New Technology and Public Relations*, including early look at the Internet



Enriching the Future of Our Profession

The Institute's five-year strategic plan, approved by the Board of Trustees and available at www.instituteforpr.org, describes how we are continuing to build, document and mainstream the science beneath the art of public relations. Our work today is focused in three main areas:

Current elements of our **research program** include:

- Commissions that combine personal expertise and pro bono service to build research-based knowledge in particular fields. These bodies include our Commission on Public Relations Measurement & Evaluation and the Commission on International Public Relations.
- Diversity and public relations – a broad examination of what we really know about building relationships with diverse constituents, communicating with diverse audiences and through diverse means, to support the value of diversity.
- A study of the credibility of news coverage versus advertising to induce consumer purchase behavior.
- A Research Committee that broadly represents the profession to articulate and implement clear priorities for Institute research.

Our **educational program** includes:

- The Institute for Public Relations Forums series, combining academic and professional faculty to deliver programs that truly stand apart. The flagship course is our Public Relations Executive Forum for

high-potential, mid-career corporate communications professionals. A related course, the Public Relations Leadership Forum, serves high-potential agency people (and corporate people whose primary responsibilities include managing the agency).

- The Summit on Measurement, presented annually on the University of New Hampshire campus. This event brings together leading thinkers in PR measurement and working professionals who seek to improve their use of research. The Summit on Corporate Communications, our newest program, uses the same model in another area of practice.
- The Business School Seminar series with Henley Management College and *PRWeek* in the UK.
- The Annual Distinguished Lecture, a tradition which dates back to 1961, where a major figure in PR practice or education, or a related field, addresses a topic of vital importance to our profession. In some years, the Institute also presents an International Distinguished Lecture in Europe.

Our **education-industry affairs program** includes:

- The International Public Relations Research Conference, which the Institute supports in conjunction with the University of Miami and other sponsors. This unique conference for academic research also attracts top professionals to learn from the educators and to present research themselves.
- Working with other public relations organizations to influence the direction and standing of academic education, including updated curricular guidelines.
- Revival of a long-standing Institute tradition of sponsored internships to bring senior public relations educators into corporate and agency settings as faculty in residence.

1989

Name changed to Institute for Public Relations Research and Education



1990

Produce *Communications that Count* video on value of public relations

1992

Public Relations Executive Forum established for high-potential, mid-career corporate communications people; now co-sponsored by Arthur W. Page Society

Ketchum Excellence in PR Research Award starts as the Smart Grant and Internship



1996

PR Evaluation Summit Meeting lays groundwork for Commission on Public Relations Measurement & Evaluation in 1998

Institute's first website begins offering all of our publications free

Leadership: The Challenge for Tomorrow

The Institute for Public Relations has a prestigious past and a promising but challenging future. This organization is all of us: Trustees, Commissions, Committee members, staff, and everyone who supports the Institute by:

- participating in our programs
- attending our events
- accessing the resources on our free website
- telling their colleagues about us
- and contributing financially.

In 1956, the leaders of our field established an institution whose purpose was to improve the practice of public relations through research and education. Over time, this mission has passed from generation to generation. Today, as leaders of a still-evolving field, we must together accept the challenge to identify and undertake the mission-critical tasks for our times. We must think bigger and do bigger things as we seek to build, document and mainstream the science beneath the art of this profession we proudly call public relations.

Our profession matters. And the work of the Institute for Public Relations matters.

As the Institute passes this landmark of 50 years serving the profession, we hope that – wherever you are based in the world – you and your organization will commit to the Institute's work. The Institute needs and depends upon your support – in cash, in kind, through planned gifts or bequests, and through your personal involvement in all that we do. If you are already among our supporters, this is the perfect time to increase your giving and involvement. If not yet a supporter, this is the perfect time to begin.

Now is the moment to leave your own mark on the future of public relations

1997

First International Symposium, *When in Rome Do We Do as the Romans Do?* presented with University of Florida College of Business Administration



1998

Corporate Communications Policy Concerning the Internet surveys senior-level corporate public relations officers

Institute research award presented at first Interdisciplinary Public Relations Research Conference at University of Maryland; IPRRC now held in conjunction with University of Miami each year

Establish Alexander Hamilton Medal for lifetime contribution to professional public relations

2001

Psychology and Public Relations Today is the first in a series of interdisciplinary bibliographies sponsored by General Motors



2002

Primer of Public Relations Research by Dr. Don W. Stacks published by Guilford Press

2003

Co-sponsor Arthur W. Page Society Case Writing Competition to develop more business school teaching material involving public relations

International Index of Bribery for News Coverage published in cooperation with the International Public Relations Association

2004

Create Golden Ruler Award for excellence in measurement; renamed for Jack Felton in 2006

With *PRWeek*, explore measurement from perspectives of clients, agencies, researchers and educators

International Distinguished Lecture by Harold Burson, and first Business School Seminar with Henley Management College and *PRWeek-UK*

2005

Public Relations Leadership Forum launched for high-potential agency executives; co-sponsored by Page Society and Council of PR Firms

Science Beneath the Art column debuts in *PR News*

2006

50th anniversary celebrated with launch of Summit on Corporate Communications





FOUNDED 1956

*Dedicated to the Science Beneath
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