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**Leadership Development:  
Where Do PRSSA Faculty Advisors Stand?**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is implicit in the definition of public relations, and recent research has demonstrated how important leadership is from the perspective of conceptualization and theory development. (Meng et al, 2012). The assumption that leadership is somewhat synonymous with the definition of excellent public relations that emphasizes the management function begs the question -- how do individuals learn the concept of leadership and develop leadership skills? Does it happen at the undergraduate level?

A Google search of undergraduate curriculum in public relations by this author identified only one university with course offerings that included “leadership.” Temple University offers an introductory course required for strategic communication majors, STRC 1112 “Communicating Leadership” and an “Organizational Leadership Concentration” that includes courses such as STRC 2672 “Global Communication and Leadership,” STRC 2696 “Diverse Communication and Leadership.” Even though the word “leadership” is absent from most public relations courses titles, the topic is likely discussed at least tangentially in most if not all undergraduate public relations courses (Neff, 2002). Moreover, leadership is the core of many student development programs and co-curricular organizations such as the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). Using the test of excellent leadership in public relations created by Meng, et al, this study examines the degree to which educators demonstrate, teach, or model excellent leadership in their roles as faculty advisors to PRSSA.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Leadership is the focus of a plethora of scholarly and trade articles across disciplines, and a proliferation of leadership based programs at colleges and universities has evolved (Choi & Choi, 2009; Cohen, 2011; Lipshitz & Mann, 2005; Smith & Peterson, 1988; Vance & Larson, 2002; Warneke, 2008; Yukl, 1989). Leadership styles, behaviors, skills, talents have been explicated and studied. While the pace of new manuscripts about leadership persists and the increasing emphasis on the “importance of leadership to the study and practice of public relations, it is an area of scholarship that has received little attention” and continues to demand more scholarly attention (Meng et al, 2012; Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). In the trade literature, for example, one writer has identified five leadership skills for public

relations practitioners to master to move up the management ladder (Mills, 2007), another lists ten leadership talents (Cohen, 2011) and dozens of leadership programs are listed on the internet at such places as The Center for Creative Leadership ([www.ccl.org](http://www.ccl.org)) and the International Leadership Association ([www.ila-net.org](http://www.ila-net.org)) (Warneke, 2008). While some skills or behaviors are almost always touted as essential for a good leader, the latitude for what constitutes effective leadership is implied in the following quote in a *Public Relations Tactic* article from a former chair of a state university's undergraduate agricultural leadership program, "We maintain that all college graduates are leaders – not by chance, but by choice." (Warneke, 2008)

Public relations leadership is the topic of at least three recent member surveys of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) (Choi & Choi, 2009; Meng et al, 2012, Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). One 2009 study identified two leadership styles present in public relations environments: inclusive and transformational (Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). Another study suggested that providing vision, serving as a change agent, and creating alliances inside and outside the organization are important factors in public relations leadership (Choi & Choi, 2009). Meng et al defined the construct of "excellent public relations leadership" and suggested that "excellent leaders in public relations are different from leaders in other fields in three ways: They must hold a compelling vision for communication, possess comprehensive understanding of media and information systems, and effectively develop and implement strategic communication plans." According to respondents in this study, the three most important qualities of excellent leadership are strategic decision-making capability, problem-solving ability, and communication knowledge and expertise. The most valuable sources of leadership skills and development for these survey respondents were on-the-job experiences, individual initiative and desire, and role models. (Meng et al, 2012). Interviews with 97 high-level U.S. communications managers points to the role of leadership in supporting professional success at the individual level. Factors common to the success of senior public relations executives are diverse experiences, comprehensive communication skills, and being proactive. (Berger, et al, 2007).

How do college and university programs prepare their public relations students to be leaders? While the recent results by Meng et al are consistent with those of traditional managerial leadership research, the study calls for "PR educators and professional trainers to develop more leadership courses or training programs to prepare public relations students

and young PR professionals to be the future leaders.” The study poses questions such as “How and to what extent, for example, is leadership development incorporated in the classroom? What teaching approaches are most effective? Similarly, which of the many diverse professional development programs are most effective? “ and “who are the role models for our profession, and how can we make them more accessible to practitioners and students?” (Meng et al, 2012)

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations was established at the University of Alabama in 2005 to help build a research-based foundation of knowledge in this area. According to the Center’s website, [www.plankcenter.ua.edu](http://www.plankcenter.ua.edu), its mission is “to advance leadership values and skills in public relations and bridge the gap between education and practice.” Neff makes a strong case that leadership should be emphasized in the basic public relations principles course because the context of the internship and the rare co-op opportunity provides an inadequate level of leadership experience (Neff, 2002). An important undergraduate leadership opportunity unmentioned in her study is PRSSA membership. The opportunity to lead by being a chapter officer, participating in a student-run firm or running for National Committee are the obvious leadership opportunities for PRSSA members; however, leadership development is inherent in the nature of PRSSA’s mission and vision:

The Society’s mission is “to serve our members by enhancing their knowledge of public relations and providing access to professional development opportunities; and to serve the public relations profession by helping to develop highly qualified, well-prepared professionals. The PRSSA vision explains how we have become and will remain the premier pre-professional organization for students in public relations. Growth — Becoming the largest, most respected and widely recognized organization for pre-professional students with an interest in public relations. Education — Enhancing the future professional through classroom preparation, leadership and experience. Advancement — Moving the public relations profession forward through public awareness, meaningful ethics and diverse representation. Relationships — Aligning with PRSA and forming a free interchange of ideas through professional relationships, practical training and mentoring. Students — Providing members with national, regional and local opportunities to network, share ideas and grow professionally. ([prssa.org](http://prssa.org)).

PRSSA now hosts a Leadership Rally for chapter presidents, and PRSA hosts a similar leadership event for chapter presidents-elect and District/Section chairs-elect. Faculty advisors of PRSSA chapters are invited to attend a training session at the annual national conference. Session notes from the 2009 conference are available at [prssa.org](http://prssa.org), accompanied by a list of links to tools for advisors to strengthen their PRSSA chapters.

While the job description for faculty advisors does not include the phrase “leadership development” or “leadership skills,” implicit in the list of responsibilities in the PRSSA Chapter Handbook is the faculty advisor’s duty to be an effective leader. According to the Handbook, the “Faculty Advisor is the official link between the student Chapter and the sponsoring PRSA Chapter...Some responsibilities include:

- Set a tone of professionalism for the Chapter, its officers and members.
- Motivate members through example and counsel to be active members of PRSSA.
- Stress that PRSSA is a national organization; it is the affiliate of PRSA, the world’s largest organization of public relations professionals.
- Stress that a PRSSA Chapter is not a “club.”
- Represent the Chapter in the sponsoring academic department.
- Explain the objectives of PRSSA to other faculty members.
- Obtain the support of faculty and other college or university officials in decision-making positions on behalf of PRSSA and of public relations as a “teachable” profession.
- Communicate department messages to Chapter members and sponsoring PRSA Chapter.
- Continue communication with the sponsoring PRSA Chapter, particularly with the PRSA member who has been designated as the PRSSA Chapter’s Professional Advisor, to encourage an active, productive relationship between the PRSSA and PRSA Chapters.
- Meet with the Professional Advisor, PRSSA and PRSA Chapter Presidents early in the academic year to establish objectives for the PRSA/PRSSA relationship. (PRSSA Chapter Handbook, 2011-12).

For example, a faculty advisor needs effective leadership skills to “set the tone,” “motivate members through example and counsel,” and represent the chapter to one’s academic department and obtain support from them for PRSSA. Certainly encouragement of “an active, productive relationship between the PRSSA and PRSA chapters” and coordinating these chapters and the professional advisors to establish objectives for the PRSA/PRSSA relationship requires leadership savvy.

## **PURPOSE**

How do PRSSA faculty advisors acquire the leadership skills necessary to accomplish the above responsibilities effectively along with their other responsibilities of teaching, research, and service? To what extent do faculty advisors believe they are effective leaders

and thus effective models of effective leadership behavior for their PRSSA chapter members? Do faculty advisors believe that PRSSA member participation has an impact on a student's life after graduation, particularly in regard to leadership in his or her workplace or community? The purpose of this study is to determine faculty advisor's perceptions of leadership, leadership experience and training and to determine whether there is any correlation between these perceptions and experiences with the leadership experiences of their chapter members or chapter recognition for outstanding achievement.

## **METHODOLOGY**

First, informal interviews were conducted in October 2010 with four faculty advisors, one professional advisor of nationally ranked or honorable mention Bateman competition teams. While the intended purpose of these interviews was to identify the leadership training of faculty advisors, their leadership training of students on their Bateman team, and the extent to which leadership experience was a criteria for team selection, the results of this small sample of interviews redirected the researcher to consider more broadly all PRSSA faculty advisors' perceptions of leadership, their training, and their chapter's effectiveness as indicated by national PRSSA recognition. Among the interviewees, the extent of leadership training was widely divergent, but there was no common selection process or criteria for selection. The one common thread was that the five advisors primarily relied on modeling effective leadership behavior to help team members develop or enhance their leadership skills. Considering the diversity of experience and the diverse methods of team member selection among a limited number of nationally ranked or honorable mention teams, comprised presumably of excellent students with a propensity toward leadership, this researcher recognized the gap in the literature about perceptions of leadership and leadership training of PRSSA faculty advisors who are called upon to model effective leadership for their students.

Thus, a 22-item online survey instrument was created, approved by the author's Institutional Review Board, and distributed via email to all PRSSA advisors in March 2012 to help describe perceptions about leadership, their leadership styles and success measured in terms of national accomplishment through PRSSA sanctioned activities. The survey was emailed to the PRSSA faculty advisor listserv from the national PRSSA office, and two

reminders from the office were sent in two subsequent weeks. Of the 328 faculty advisors who are subscribed to the listserv, 126 or 38.4% responded to the survey.

The survey included demographic questions about age, gender, years of public relations work experience, years of college or university teaching experience, and the frequency with which they had advised chapters who have hosted a regional activity, a national conference, a Bateman Case Study competition, or received a Teahan award.

Regarding sources for their own leadership skills and development, faculty advisors were asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale about the extent to which they relied on the following sources: communication skills training, examples set by excellent role models, formal education (university level), individual initiative and desire, mentors and mentoring programs, on-the-job experience, powerful personal experiences or events, professional development programs (e.g., PRSA, IABC or others), genetics. These sources were duplicated from the January 2012 study as were the qualities of excellent leadership the respondents most likely exhibit in their role as PRSSA faculty advisor (Meng et al, 2012). Using a five-point Likert scale from very unlikely to very likely, respondents rated the following qualities: ability to demonstrate the value of public relations, an organizational culture which supports communication, ability to solve problems and produce results, being trustworthy and dependable, being visionary and inspiring, communication knowledge and expertise, ethical values and orientation, relationship-building abilities, strategic decision making capability, and team collaboration ability.

A five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used to measure the extent to which respondents agreed that students develop leadership skills through each of 17 items or PRSSA activities: membership in PRSSA, attendance at PRSSA chapter events, PRSSA chapter leadership (officer or member of chapter executive board), leadership of a student-run firm, participation in a student-run firm, hosting an annual PRSSA regional activity, attendance at a regional PRSSA activity, attendance at the national PRSSA conference, Bateman team participation, Bateman team leadership, participation on a Finalist Bateman team, participation on an Honorably Mention Bateman team, receiving a national PRSSA scholarship, attendance at a PRSSA Leadership Rally, attendance at a PRSSA National Assembly, and service as a National Committee member.

For these same 17 items, respondents were asked about the extent to which they track students after graduation and whether they believe students who have participated in

these 17 activities are likely to exhibit leadership qualities in the workplace or their communities after graduation. The survey also included a subset of questions for faculty advisors of the Bateman Case Study Competition. Forty of the 126 respondents indicated that they had advised at least one Bateman team in the past. Forty represents about half (51%) of the average total number of advisors (79) who have submitted a Bateman intent-to-enter form over the past 10 years, according to the PRSSA Manager of Student Programs. It should be noted, however, that the number of actual submissions every year is at least 10-25% lower than the number of teams who submit the intent-to-enter form. For example, 94 teams submitted intent-to-enter forms this year, but only 70 actually submitted the entry in March.

Among the questions for the subset of faculty advisors who had advised Bateman teams were:

1. How likely are you to exhibit the following qualities (the same 10 qualities as listed in the question for all PRSSA faculty advisors) of excellent leadership in your role as faculty advisor to your chapter's Bateman Case Study Competition team?
2. To what extent are the following experiences required for students to participate in PRSSA Bateman teams that you advise? Bateman faculty advisors were asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale (very little extent to very great extent) about these seven experiences: Formal leadership training, participation in student organizations other than PRSSA, leadership of student organizations, internship or other work experience, service-learning experience, academic excellence, and combination of two or more of the above mentioned experiences.
3. What most closely represents your role in the formation of your PRSSA Bateman team(s) for your chapter? Respondents selected one answer among: I decide, I decide with our team's professional advisor, I decide along with a review panel including students, I have no role. Students select the team.

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## **FINDINGS**

The descriptive data indicated that almost 40% of the respondents were 31-45 years of age, and almost 28 percent were 56-65 years of age, and the majority (64%) were female.

Almost half (43%) had between 10 and 20 years of public relations experience. Thirty percent had fewer than 10 years public relations experience, and 27% had more than 20 years of public relations experience. Almost half (46%) had fewer than 10 years experience teaching at a college or university, 35% had between 10 and 20 years, and 19% had more than 20 years teaching experience.

Among their chapters' activities, almost 53% said they had advised a chapter with a student-run firm, 29% have advised a chapter that has hosted a regional activity, and almost 6 percent have advised a national conference host chapter. Six percent have advised a chapter that has received one Teahan award, and seven percent have advised a chapter that has received multiple Teahan awards. The majority, obviously (87%) have never received a Teahan award. Similarly, the majority (68%) have not advised a Bateman Case Study Competition. Ten percent have advised one team, and 23% have advised multiple teams.

Almost everyone (92%) said they believed it is their responsibility to facilitate leadership development for their chapter members. Faculty advisors said they relied to a great or very great extent on the following four sources for their own leadership development: 1. individual initiative and desire with 92% ( $n=116$ ), 2. on-the-job experiences with 88% ( $n=111$ ), 3. examples set by excellent role models with 79% ( $n=100$ ), and 4. powerful personal experiences or events with 77% ( $n=97$ ).

Faculty advisors reported that they are equally “very likely” to exhibit communication knowledge and expertise and being trustworthy and dependable with 68% ( $n=86$ ). The second most likely quality is ethical values and orientation with 64% being very likely to exhibit this quality ( $n=80$ ). Third is the ability to demonstrate the value of public relations with 62% ( $n=78$ ).

Among the PRSSA activities which help students develop leadership skills are PRSSA chapter leadership with 79% of the respondents strongly agreeing ( $n=89$ ), leadership of a student-run firm with 65% ( $n=73$ ), service as a National Committee member with 47% ( $n=53$ ), and Bateman team leadership with 45% ( $n=51$ ). Students who participated in the following activities are tracked after graduation to a very great extent according to more than half of the respondents: member of host committee for national PRSSA conference with 74% ( $n=83$ ), member of a national finalist Bateman team with 72% ( $n=81$ ), member of host committee for PRSSA regional activity with 69% ( $n=78$ ), National Committee member with 66% ( $n=75$ ), and member of a Bateman team recognized with honorable mention with 65%

( $n=73$ ). Faculty advisors say they track to some extent PRSSA officers with 34% ( $n=38$ ) and all PRSSA members with 48% ( $n=54$ ). The likelihood of keeping track of PRSSA members after graduation is important in regard to faculty advisors' perception of the degree to which students exhibit leadership qualities in the workplace or their communities after graduation. Generally, one would expect the perception to be more accurate if the faculty advisor tracks a student after graduation.

Sixty-four percent ( $n=72$ ) of faculty advisors strongly agree that PRSSA officers are likely to exhibit leadership qualities in the workplace or in their communities. Fifty-three percent ( $n=60$ ) mildly agree that PRSSA members who participated in a student-run firm would likely exhibit leadership qualities in the workplace or in their communities, and 48% ( $n=54$ ) mildly agree that PRSSA membership alone leads to leadership after graduation. For all other activities, most respondents are neutral about whether the activities lead to a display of leadership after graduation.

Regarding the subset of questions for faculty advisors of Bateman teams, about 32% of the sample ( $n=40$ ) answered these questions. The top quality of excellent leadership (reported as very likely to exhibit) was the ability to solve problems and produce results with 75% ( $n=30$ ). Next were two qualities equally very likely to be exhibited with 70% ( $n=28$ ): ability to demonstrate the value of public relations and being trustworthy and dependable. The third most likely with 68% ( $n=27$ ) is team collaboration. A close fourth were ethical values and orientation and strategic decision making ability, both with 65% ( $n=26$ ).

From the list of criteria for Bateman team participation, the only significant criteria required to a very great extent was participation in student organizations with 35% ( $n=14$ ). The three significant items required to a great extent were academic excellence with 40% ( $n=16$ ), combination of two or more of the above mentioned experiences 33% ( $n=13$ ), and internship or other work experience ( $n=12$ ). Almost half of the Bateman faculty advisors (47% or  $n=15$ ) said they have no role in selection of the team, that students select the team members. Thirty-one percent ( $n=10$ ) of the sample reported that they decide alone, and 19% ( $n=6$ ) said they decide along with a review panel including students. Only one respondent decides along with the team's professional advisor. Ten respondents marked "other," and six of the 40 who answered the other Bateman advisor questions skipped the question.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this survey serve to solidify the implications of the Meng et al study for future research and practical implications for educators and practitioners (Meng et al). While the Meng et al study quantified the leadership traits deemed most important by practitioners, this study uses those traits to demonstrate which traits faculty perceive they practice most in their role as PRSSA faculty advisors. This is important because of the implicit role of faculty advisors as leadership role models for PRSSA members. In fact, since faculty advisors overwhelmingly reported that they believe they are responsible for the facilitation of student leadership development of PRSSA members, one can conclude that the role of PRSSA as a co-curricular activity is a critical component of the undergraduate experience for students who attend a university or college that sponsors a PRSSA chapter, complementing students' coursework, internships and other extra-curricular activities. Thus, the role of the faculty advisor is especially significant in the leadership learning outcomes for students who participate in PRSSA.

While a considerable percentage of faculty advisors were 56 or older (28%), it is significant that almost two-thirds of the sample were 45 or younger and that 30% had fewer than 10 years of public relations experience. It is worthwhile to note here that the pre-survey interviews indicated that the advisors who considerable public relations work experience were the only ones who had experienced formal leadership training in the past.

The faculty advisors' sources for leadership development were the same as the practitioners in the Meng et al study: individual initiative and desire, on-the-job experiences and examples set by excellent role models. Even though this study reports faculty advisor's perception of the qualities of leadership they exhibit in their role as faculty advisors, and the Meng et al study reported the practitioners' perceived importance of leadership qualities, the top quality was similar. Both advisors and practitioners emphasized communication knowledge and expertise; however, the advisors put equal importance on being trustworthy and dependable. Beyond that, the results were different. The other highly-rated leadership qualities for faculty advisors were ethical values and orientation whereas problem-solving ability and strategic decision-making capability were the other highest-rated qualities in the Meng et al study. This difference is to be expected considering the teaching and advising role of the faculty respondent. However, the difference calls for more examination about

how faculty advisors can best facilitate the leadership qualities of problem-solving ability and strategic decision-making capability.

The subset of Bateman faculty advisors, however, showed slightly different results. Bateman faculty advisors perceived that they exhibited most highly the leadership qualities of problem-solving ability, next demonstrating the value of public relations and being trustworthy and dependable. A close fourth was ethical values and orientation and strategic decision making ability.

The variation in tracking PRSSA members after graduation was widely divergent. The results seem to suggest that only the students who participate in high profile leadership activities are tracked to a very great extent after graduation: National PRSSA Conference host committee members, Bateman national finalist team members, PRSSA regional activity host committee members, National Committee members, and Bateman honorable mention teams. The fact that only 34% of the faculty advisors who responded to this survey (which is only a percentage of all faculty advisors) track to “some extent” PRSSA officers, the chapter leaders, is disturbing.

Imperceptible were the gender differences in the full sample of PRSSA faculty advisors, similar to Meng et al. Other than correlation for gender, the sample size of 126 was too small to run multivariate tests. The only other bivariate item was “do you consider it your responsibility as faculty advisor to facilitate student leadership development in your role as faculty advisor?” Since the answer to that question was overwhelmingly positive (92%), a correlation for that factor would be meaningless.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since it is indisputable that PRSSA faculty advisors consider their responsibility to facilitate student leadership development of PRSSA members, it is incumbent upon practitioners and researchers to ensure that such facilitation occurs with excellence. The similar identification among practitioners and faculty advisors of leadership qualities and sources of leadership development is encouraging. Now that Meng et al have defined excellent leadership qualities, PRSSA and PRSA websites, training opportunities, and job responsibilities should clearly identify these as standards. In fact, explicit statement of the responsibility for student leadership development, or the facilitation thereof, should be clarified in the responsibilities of the faculty advisor. Perhaps, even, the addition of

leadership as one of the benefits to PRSSA membership or to the mission should be considered.

If one way to encourage student leadership development is to make role models more accessible to practitioners to students, as Meng et al suggests, then the most accessible role models, public relations professors, particularly faculty advisors of PRSSA, should receive the same kind of leadership training that PRSA and PRSSA chapter leaders receive. The annual roundtable training session at the National PRSSA Conference for faculty advisors is a valuable resource about important organizational and chapter topics and activities. The addition of a leadership topic, perhaps led by a student leadership development expert, would be valuable. Perhaps another consideration that could be helpful for faculty advisors is to be invited and/or encouraged to attend either a session designed especially for them at the annual PRSSA Leadership Rally or a PRSA Leadership Rally where they would hear experts talk about student leadership development in addition to the necessary components of PRSA/PRSSA organizational topics. Of course, not all faculty advisors would need or want to attend every year, but an occasional workshop about student leadership development would be helpful, especially for young faculty or professionals-turned-faculty who are assigned the responsibility of PRSSA Faculty Advisor. If leadership is a critical skill for undergraduates to learn, the faculty responsible for the co-curricular organization should be well equipped to guide and nurture their own student leaders and aspiring leaders in public relations. Perhaps co-programming with college or university administrators in Student Development could enhance the bridge between academics and leadership development. Better yet, if funding could be secured, leadership fellowships, similar to the Educator Fellowships offered by the Plank Center for Leadership Development could assist faculty advisors to participate in an appropriate leadership institute or to shadow practitioners who have been designated as effective leaders in their workplaces. On a more limited basis, content similar to the Learning to Teach CD available at the PRSA store and Learning to Teach: Taking PR Into the Classroom workshop could be created especially for faculty advisors – about student leadership development, not just about PRSSA chapter activities and rules. Such a resource would be valued not just for the information, but would help faculty advisors better leverage their position among students, among university colleagues and among the professional community. Strengthening connections between the academy and practitioners has long been held as a priority for

PRSSA and the PRSA Educators Academy, and the PRSA Educational Affairs committee. Identification of practitioners who have been recognized for their outstanding leadership and having them share their expertise with academics would be extremely useful in the classroom, of course, but also to faculty advisors – not just student members of PRSSA.

For PRSSA and possibly PRSA to enhance and add web links for faculty advisors, including timely email or listserv reminders to view the online information, would be a low-cost way to remind faculty advisors of student leadership development tools. Moreover, the PRSSA Chapter Handbook and perhaps the prssa.org website could offer more up to date leadership training information or best practices from faculty advisors similar to the section about best chapter practices in the Chapter Handbook. Also, since the responsibilities listed in the Chapter handbook imply facilitation of student leadership development, the duty should be explicitly stated with resources available for faculty who have not received training in student leadership development. While some may perceive email reminders to web content about leadership as unnecessary or even beyond the parameters of an academic, the fact remains that the work of a PRSSA faculty advisor often is not an academic's highest priority because of tenure and promotion criteria. Faculty advisors likely would welcome such information, especially those who may not have receive university resources to attend the national PRSA or PRSSA conference annually. Indeed, the cost of registration for the full International PRSA Conference is prohibitive, but the low ranking of formal education programs at universities and PRSA as resources for leadership development for practitioners and for faculty advisors was surprising (Meng et al). Possibly a conference registration or discounted registration could be offered as incentive for recipients of a new award created for a faculty advisor who excels in student leadership development. Far-fetched? Maybe, but the idea symbolizes the need for a new paradigm of identifying and rewarding best practices in student leadership development, perhaps beyond the traditional Teahan recognition. Not far-fetched is the notion of leveraging the expertise of chapters and advisors who receive PRSSA national recognition in terms of sharing best practices. For example, tracking graduates should be a priority for faculty advisors.

The recognition for long-term faculty advisors at the annual awards banquet at the annual PRSSA national conference is a step in the right direction. Recognition of the role of the faculty advisors in student leadership development, especially for public relations students, can strengthen the position of faculty seeking tenure and promotion. In fact,

stronger positioning of the role of faculty advisor as instrumental to students' leadership development and clearer identification of tools to enhance one's own leadership ability and to nurture leadership development in one's PRSSA members might assist faculty advisors as they seek to secure funds from their academic unit, college, or even the student development unit. A stronger partnership with student development administrators could be mutually beneficial. In fact such partnerships with leadership experts could strengthen faculty advisor's knowledge of leadership skills, especially conflict negotiation and team building skills.

Undoubtedly, the role of faculty advisor to a PRSSA chapter is just that – an advisor. The survey results that indicate how Bateman teams are selected shows the inconsistency with which faculty relate to the term “advisor.” One might assume that the ideal response for a faculty advisor to this question would be that they decide along with a review panel that includes students. Only six respondents selected this option, however. Almost half said that they have no role, and 31% said that they decide alone. These statistics are understandable, however, considering the challenge of confidentiality of having students participate in the review process and the unpredictability of a strong cohort of student reviewers. Therein lies the conundrum for a faculty member who considers his or her advising role with a minimalistic approach. For a chapter to thrive without the continuity of a strong advisor familiar with PRSSA chapter best practices is difficult, and the difficulty is multiplied for a faculty advisor to facilitate leadership development without adequate resources and recognition. Students who come to college with a variety of ill-informed notions about leadership should not be expected to learn best practices from a few peers who have had excellent leadership training in high school. To rely completely on high school leadership experience and the initiative of students could be more of a disservice than a system in which faculty advisors have a stronger role with stronger educational background or training in student leadership development.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Of course, effective chapter leadership is not limited to national recognition of PRSSA sanctioned activities. Many faculty advisors and chapter officers are effective leaders even if they have not won a Teahan award or participated on a national level. Such

accomplishment was used as only one outward measure of effectiveness. Along those lines, the survey could have been expanded to include questions about whether respondents had advised PRSSA chapters that have submitted a Teahan chapter award entry, are accredited through PRSA or have earned a public relations degree, have advised a chapter who has applied or obtained Certification (CEPR) through the Educational Affairs committee of PRSA, have ASJMC accreditation or the extent to which they encourage Associate membership or track students who take advantage of PRSA Associate membership. Establishing cause and effect of PRSSA membership or leadership opportunities would be difficult, but future research about the work and community lives of PRSSA graduates could illuminate strengths and weaknesses of the leadership development experience of PRSSA and the significance of the role of faculty and professional advisors and the extent to which their leadership qualities or experience were influencers.

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